



OHIO VOTER

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Redistricting Process: Ripe for Change in Ohio.

After decades of struggle over how best to devise a responsible, fair, and honest system for the creation of political districts in Ohio, the League suddenly finds itself in a uniquely powerful place to take the lead on reform. League knowledge grows out of activism dating back to the 1960s.

Prior to 1965 the process of establishing legislative districts had been one of apportionment rather than districting. It was a system based on county lines that offered little discretion and gave no opportunity for gerrymandering.

In 1967 Ohioans voted in a constitutional change that revolutionized how legislative districts were formed. An era was ushered in that allowed unlimited discretion as to how district boundaries were drawn. Depending on which party was in control of the legislature and administrative offices, districts were drawn to favor Democrats or Republicans.

With the recent improvements in computer technology, partisans in charge of drawing district lines have access to astonishingly accurate demographic information. The travesty of these so-called improvements

is that *legislators choose their voters instead of the voters choosing their legislators.* With precision, the minority party can be 'given' a few districts. There is even a name for this horse-trading-'sweetheart gerrymandering.' The think tank of Belden Russonello and Stewart's research shows that, "The system keeps the system corrupt and denies an equal chance to a candidate with new ideas. We need to create new rules for drawing district lines so that voters have the opportunity to elect candidates that represent the needs of their community."

Democracy is the art of the possible. It may be confusing and most people, at any given time, may not be paying attention, but when a situation gets bad enough, people notice. The late Molly Ivins' observation is pertinent: "The thing about democracy, beloveds, is that it is not neat, orderly, or quiet. It requires a certain relish for confusion."

Polls can help. Current polls show that the popular vote no longer is reflected in the composition of the Ohio legislature. Polls also tell us that people are now willing to vote for changing the

See REDISTRICTING PROCESS on page 7

Election Reform Is Happening!

Two years ago the League of Women Voters of Ohio proposed Ten Points for Election Reform in Ohio. Only a few of our recommendations have been enacted, but one was the change in law to allow 17-year-olds to serve as pollworkers. This has proved a great success, providing more computer expertise at the polls, while providing a real-world civics lesson to young people. Older pollworkers love having these enthusiastic high school students on hand, and the students have been a big help in alleviating the chronic pollworker shortage, especially in urban areas.

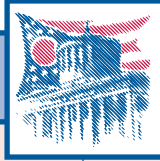
Another of our recommendations was to make absentee voting more accessible by removing the requirement that a voter wishing to cast an absentee ballot must first specify from an approved list of reasons why s/he could not go to the polls in person. The legisla-

ture enacted this reform, although they then attached a counterproductive requirement that the voter must provide some kind of identification with the absentee ballot.

With these achievements in mind, the state board recently approved a revised plan, 10-Point Proposal for Election Administration Reform, that includes some of the original recommendations not already implemented, as well as some additions and modifications. Because of problems arising from the election law changes enacted in 2006 in House Bill 3, the new 10-point proposal focuses on a wide range of problems that need to be addressed administratively and in the statutes. The full text of the new proposal is available on the state League website at www.lwvohio.org. Look it up, print it out and distribute it widely!

See ELECTION REFORM on page 7

ACTION



UPDATE

Now that the governor's \$53 billion budget proposal for State Fiscal Years 2008-09 has been introduced, the real work of the legislature begins—making the tough choices that determine how lean resources are allocated. LWVO was happy to see increased health care coverage, a check on college tuition costs, and a reduction in the school voucher program proposed. These are among the critical issues that League lobbyists will be working on. Be sure to subscribe to the Legislative Update to stay informed—just e-mail lwvoinfo@lwvohio.org to be added to the e-mail list.

At the same time, constitutional amendments are on center stage. One, the proposed school funding constitutional amendment, would be placed on the ballot by initiative, and will not be heard in the legislature. Two other significant proposals are now being heard in the House and Senate.

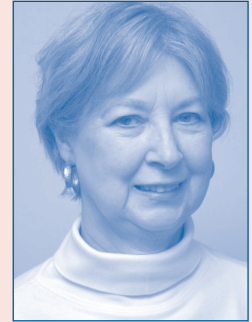
Senate Joint Resolution 1, Taking of Private Property, introduced by Sen. Kevin Coughlin, intended to provide limits on the power of a public authority to take private property for public use. It would implement the recommendations of last year's Eminent Domain Task Force, which are meant to outlaw the practice of using eminent domain to further economic development for

the sole purpose of generating government revenue.

The resolution will be heard in conjunction with Senate Bill 7, Eminent Domain, introduced by Sen. Timothy Grendell, and currently a placeholder bill. It is intended "to formally state the General Assembly's intentions in its upcoming deliberations on reforming Ohio's laws regulating the exercise of eminent domain."

It would define blight as well as who can take property and when, private property owner rights, and the process for public participation.

House Joint Resolution 1, Legislative and Congressional Districts, introduced by Rep. Kevin DeWine, would amend the constitution to establish an independent 7-member redistricting commission. Anyone could submit a plan for consideration. Population of congressional districts would be substantially equal, plus or minus 5%. "Best efforts" would be made to maximize competitive districts. This resolution is very similar to House Joint Resolution 13, which failed to gain approval last session.



*Karen Rainey,
Legislative Director*

The Impact of imPACT

The imPACT Town Hall Meetings are making a synergistic impact on our own organization, as well! As of this printing, 13 Town Hall Meetings have been held averaging 85 attendees each—and 85% were non-League members! Twenty-seven community organizations joined in sponsoring these meetings, expanding the base of participants.

What are the local Leagues saying?

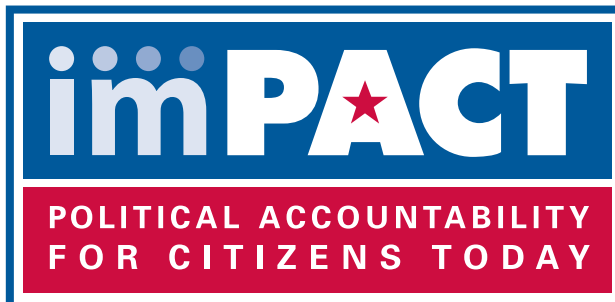
Shaker Heights was energized! The event created a very positive buzz in the

community about the League, and established a strong community link to leaders with the same interests. A future education event is being planned.

Athens received first-rate press coverage of their Town Hall Meeting which, by extension, publicized the purpose and activities of the League.

The speakers for the Columbus and Marion Town Hall Meetings did hour-long radio call-in talk shows that drew attention to the events.

See page 5 for more imPACT news. Check out the project website to learn more: www.ohioimpact.org.



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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.

The Virtues of Proportional Representation

Current proposals for redistricting reform in Ohio and elsewhere tend to focus on who draws the district lines. Bipartisan commissions are popular on the reform agenda, and the gerrymander is the target. However, this is too narrow a focus. Other states have

tried independent or bipartisan commissions to redistrict their state legislatures, but little has changed. Incumbents are still favored, and elections remain non-competitive.

FIRST PERSON



Kathleen Barber
Professor Emerita
of Political Science
at John Carroll
University

Since retirement in 1990, Dr. Barber has published two books on election systems. She is also a member of the Cleveland Area League.

In order to attack the gerrymander, we need to look to its causes in the larger political framework. The first problem is the small, single-member district system that maximizes the number of district lines to be drawn.

Secondly, no matter how diverse the district, only one person can win. This is a winner-take-all election. For example, with 51% of the vote in a district for Party A's candidate, Party A wins 100% of that district's representation. The other 49% of the voters (say, Party B's voters and independents) are not represented in the legislature at all. Instead, the goal should be full representation – that is, voters should be represented in some rough proportion to their presence in the population. Their political views are what matter, whether expressed by independent, partisan, racial or ethnic voting.

To achieve this goal, two features are essential: first, multi-member districts, and secondly, proportional (not at-large) voting in those larger districts. For example, in a five-member district, Party A's 51% of the vote would probably win three seats, while Party B or independents would win the other two seats. This would also increase the incentive to vote for those who have grown indifferent to voting because of more or less permanent minority status. This would include Republicans in urban Democratic districts, or Democrats in heavily Republican suburbs, African-Americans in largely white districts, and vice-versa.

Local communities are adopting proportional voting methods across the country, as in Peoria, IL, Amarillo, TX and Hartford, CT. Larger districts with three, five or seven members can be drawn, thus minimizing (although not eliminating) the use of the gerrymander. No electoral system can provide perfect representation, but proportional voting in multi-member districts would significantly improve our democracy by increasing turnout and bringing more viewpoints into the legislative process.

From the Co-Presidents' Desk

League: Anachronism or Cutting Edge?

Are multi-issue organizations viable anymore? We frequently hear comments that our local Leagues have trouble recruiting members because they are unable to articulate what we do better than other worthy organizations. "Why should I join the League to work on environmental issues when the Sierra Club is the leader in that area?" "Why should I look to the League to advocate on gun control when the Brady Campaign is so much more well-known for work on that issue?"

Answer: Because the League works the system best.

Organizations like the Sierra Club and the Brady Campaign perform stellar service gathering information in support of their side of their respective single issues. They capture wonderful headlines. However, there is so much more to effecting real change.



Permission: MOTOPIOTO

Consider our road from study to action: During our study process, we gather information not only from the Sierra Club, but also from the energy industry; not only from the Brady Campaign but also from the NRA. We examine all sides of the issues, in a thoughtful, dispassionate manner.

Our consensus process following each study produces a new position on a public issue that provides a base for taking action. That new position gives our entire grassroots organization a platform from which to speak with one voice. Our local League structure provides advocates across the entire state, in every district.

Our member education process, ongoing while we study and while we take action, brings about meaningful results, not flash-in-the-pan headlines and sound bites. The depth of our members' knowledge enables all of us to stand our ground when challenged, backing our passion with facts. Our deliberative, nonpartisan ways give us our power base; officials and voters believe us when we speak out.

Our LWVO lobby corps, action alert system, and member response do not necessarily give us a 30 second demonstration of outrage on the nightly news; they do capture the attention of our legislators and help change laws.

Our Get Out The Vote efforts gather the signatures and produce the votes in League communities needed to enact new law.

You want to change the world? Join the League; we'll teach you how.

Carol Fajen

WE ARE YOUR LEAGUE: MAKE AN IMPACT!



**“The star of the traditional Saturday Night Banquet will be one of the League’s top issues—
Accountability.
As we go to press, we cannot yet reveal who will speak on the topic, but you will not want to miss it!”**



DAVID LIEBERTH will speak on *The Value of Active Citizenship* at the Saturday *Make an Impact* luncheon.

Dave Lieberth brings 34 years of private sector experience in media, law, business and community service to his position as Akron’s Deputy Mayor of Administration and Chief of Staff to Mayor Plusquellic. Mr. Lieberth has won prestigious national awards as a journalist and broadcaster. As a lawyer, Mr. Lieberth was listed in “The Best Lawyers in America” and was founding president of Summit County’s Pre-Trial Intervention Project. Community activities include directing “Imagine.Akron: 2025,” directing Akron’s 175th anniversary celebration, and helping found the Leadership Akron program.

Accountability

Workshops

Workshops are forming as the days grow closer to Convention 2007. Here are a few tasty morsels to whet your appetite:

THE VOTER, THE MEDIA AND YOUR LEAGUE:

You’ll look at “The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly” in VOTERS from other states—and identify what distinguishes them from each other! You’ll also get tips on enhancing your relationship with the media. And you’ll share your media successes and problems.

ATTAINING MEMBERSHIP DIVERSITY— WHAT ARE WE NOT DOING?:

Participate in—and learn from—a frank, lively, and interactive discussion about what we do—and don’t do—well in diversifying our membership. A follow-up to this workshop will be a roundtable discussion about the results of the recent statewide conference calls involving Membership chairs. League members will lead this conversation about membership initiatives to attain diversity.

ABCDs OF OUR HIDDEN GOVERNMENT:

You will be regaled with tales about the maze of county agencies operating without oversight and accountability. And then we’ll discuss solutions!

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION:

What is the impact of the 2008-2009 state budget on public education in Ohio—and on the proposed constitutional amendment about education funding. Learn how to stay informed.

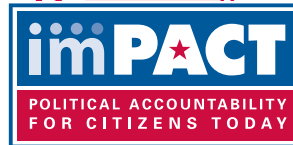
And in keeping with the theme of our Town Hall Meeting, workshops will update you on the latest League involvement in Redistricting, and Election Reform.

As always, caucuses will be held on diverse topics dear to the hearts of the caucus leaders. Come to Convention and add your voice. This is YOUR League.

Complete Convention information can be found on the League website, www.lwvohio.org. Our wonderful Membership Manager, Lisa Fry, will be happy to answer questions at membership@lwvohio.org, or call the toll-free number 877-LWV-OHIO.

Come one, come all!
Our Town Hall Meeting
is open to everyone, free of charge!

**AN UNUSUAL BREAK
 IN THE MIDDLE OF CONVENTION**



STATEWIDE TOWN HALL MEETING

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2 - 4 P.M. AT THE SHERATON SUITES
 1989 FRONT STREET, CUYAHOGA FALLS

Are you ready to have fun? Learn something interesting? Make an impact?

HELP MAKE OHIO GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVE, FAIR AND HONEST BY BEING AN INFORMED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN GOVERNMENT. JOIN IN AND...

☞ MEET OUR EXTRAORDINARY HONOREES WHO PERSONIFY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT—ROLE MODELS FOR US ALL!

THEY EXEMPLIFY THE IDEA THAT THE MORE WE ARE ENGAGED IN OUR COMMUNITIES, THE MORE LIKELY WE WILL BE ABLE TO AFFECT POSITIVE CHANGE THERE.

☞ LEARN ABOUT TWO BURNING ISSUES INVOLVING THE INFLUENCE OF BIG MONEY IN POLITICS:

\$\$ THE ROLE OF BIG MONEY IN SHAPING PUBLIC POLICY, AND
 \$\$ ITS THREAT TO JUDICIAL IMPARTIALITY AND FAIRNESS.

☞ GET MOTIVATED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

PARTICIPATE IN A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION ABOUT POSSIBLE REMEDIES—AND ABOUT WAYS YOU CAN MAKE A PERSONAL IMPACT. AND THE RESULTS OF THE TOWN HALL MEETING DISCUSSIONS WILL BE TABULATED AND CHRONICLED ON THE LEAGUE'S IMPACT WEBSITE FOR OTHERS TO LEARN FROM!

QUESTIONS? CALL THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO: 877-598-6446 (TOLL-FREE).

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION FUND'S TOWN HALL MEETING SERIES—AND THE ISSUES THAT ARE ADDRESSED—GO TO OHIOIMPACT.ORG.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO EDUCATION FUND'S TOWN HALL MEETING IS SUPPORTED BY A GENEROUS GRANT FROM THE JOYCE FOUNDATION.

Nominations for 2007 - 2009 Board of Directors



LINDA LALLEY, PRESIDENT:

Linda, current LWVO Co-President, has used her expertise in financial management and fundraising to help strengthen LWVO's internal financial controls, and to procure significant grant and non-member revenues. She has also been a key member of the election-reform lawsuit team, and has been instrumental in rejuvenating internal and external LWVO communication vehicles. Linda is a member of the Shaker Heights League.



ARDITH KECK, VICE-PRESIDENT:

Ardith served on the LWVO 2005 board, helping with fund raising and grant writing as well as serving on the Media and Resource Committees. She has served twice on the Nominating Committee of the Ohio League. She is a past president of the Akron Area League, and has moderated many candidate nights.



VICKI EWALD, VICE-PRESIDENT:

After a term on her local school board, Vicki joined the Perrysburg League, serving as Voter Service co-chair, vice president for programs and president. During Vicki's 2005 term on the LWVO board, she facilitated a successful board retreat, and served on the Resource and Events committees.



MEG FLACK, SECRETARY:

This will be Meg's second term on the LWVO board. She has served on the Advocacy and Citizens Education Committee, the imPACT Planning Committee, and the Death Penalty Study Committee. Recently she was appointed as a League member to Governor Strickland's Ohio Judicial Appointments Recommendation Panel. Meg is a member of the Metro-Columbus League.



NIKE MENDENHALL, TREASURER:

Nike (pronounced NEE-kay) served two years as a member of the Finance Committee on the 2005 LWVO board. During this time, a new investment policy was approved by the board and an off-board investment committee was appointed. Nike also served on the Resource and Advocacy Committees. She has been a member of the Cincinnati League since 1999.



CHRIS DRIVER, DIRECTOR:

Chris is currently completing her third term on the LWVO board, and has held a number of leadership positions, none more important than chairing the Personnel Committee since 2001. Her goal is to provide the best support in the state to staff and Leagues! Chris is a member of the Hudson League and serves as her local League Treasurer.



ANN HENKENER, DIRECTOR:

Ann has been on the board of trustees of the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus and the secretary of the board since 2003. As a very knowledgeable member of the state League's Lobby Corps, she has been designated by the LWVO as its representative in discussions with the Ohio legislature concerning redistricting in Ohio, and has served on the imPACT project funded by the Joyce Foundation grant.



DONNA MARIE LOSSING-JONES, DIRECTOR:

Based on her four years of service on the LWVO board just ending, Donna Marie believes that membership and development must be emphasized for League to retain its vitality. As President of the Marion League, she is familiar with the challenges that small Leagues face. On the state board she's served as membership chair and as a member of several other committees, including Personnel.

See *NOMINATIONS* on page 7

Redistricting Process *continued from page 1*

process for drawing district lines. Nearly 83 percent of respondents to a survey conducted by the University of Akron's Bliss Institute for Applied Politics said they would accept the creation of a bipartisan panel to draw district boundaries.

The good news for the League is that people are noticing, and we are ready to act. Detailed information on redistricting in Ohio can be found on the League's new website, www.ohioimpact.org, and our newly adopted 8 Point-Redistricting Reform Plan is on the state League's website, www.lwvohio.org.

The League has statewide coalitions just as interested in reform as we are, editorials about the need for change are popping up in newspapers around the state, and Democratic and Republican leaders seem genuinely interested in changing the process. League lobbyist Ann Henkener testified before the House Rules and Reference Committee about House Joint Resolution 13 (HJR 13) on May 16, 2006, and our

Lobby Corps is staying in close touch with both sides of the aisle as redistricting legislation works its way through the political process. The "art of the possible" is in play in Ohio.

(The history provided in this article was taken from The Failed Effort to Reform Ohio's Redistricting Procedures in 1978-1981 by David L. Horn. Mr. Horn often quotes the writings of Kathleen Barber, this VOTER's First Person columnist. See page 3.)

Election Reform *continued from page 1*

The ten recommendations can be grouped into three general categories: Accessibility of voting for all, transparent and efficient administration, and timely, accurate, and appropriate information dissemination.

The League of Women Voters was born out of an electoral reform movement 87 years ago. We must continue to work to ensure that every eligible citizen can cast an informed ballot and have that ballot counted honestly and without fear of intimidation.

Nominations *continued from page 6*



SALLY MIER, DIRECTOR:

Sally is currently serving on the LWV Greater Dayton Area board as the Greene County representative. She has served as teacher, grants writer and manager of grants, curriculum coordinator, and in administration of programs for children and adults. Most recently, Sally served on the board of the Leadership Institute of Yellow Springs.



GAIL PYTEL, DIRECTOR:

For her Kent League, Gail has served as president, vice-president, VOTER editor, and on more committees than she cares to think about! From 1997-2001, she was Treasurer of the LWVO. She has also chaired the state League's Budget Committee. Gail serves on the Leadership Portage County Alumni board.



NINA SABRACK, DIRECTOR:

Nina joined the state board in 2005, and became chair of the Media Committee, which allowed her to build on her experience as Communications Director of the League of Women Voters of California. Nina is a member of the

Toledo-Lucas County League. She hails from Cleveland and went to college with Meg Flack.



DEBBIE SCHMIEDING, DIRECTOR:

Debbie, currently a member of the state board, found good uses for her financial talents as Treasurer. She also is a member of the imPACT Planning Committee. Deb has been a League member for only five years, but has already been co-president of the Athens League for two years and newsletter editor for another two.



MARY KIRTZ VAN NORTWICK, DIRECTOR:

Mary joined the League in Oberlin after moving to the U. S. from Canada in 1965. During the next decade, she headed a local school study and co-edited the Oberlin League's newsletter. The Oberlin League disbanded and Mary moved away, but she returned at the time League was revived. She was Voter Service chair in 2003. League was the first organization she joined as an adult.

The MAL Corner: Who Are You?

As a "MAL," you are one of Ohio's 82 Members-At-Large—one of the Leaguers from across the state who is not affiliated with any local League, typically because there is no League in your area. But as a MAL, you are vital to both LWVO and LWVUS.

In fact, you can play a significant role in League activity as a MAL. You can participate in Statehouse Day, Convention and Council. You can join state study committees, become a lobbyist, and even become a member of the LWVO Board. Perhaps most importantly, you can become part of our advocacy team by receiving and responding to emailed action alerts.

If you live geographically close to other MALs, it's possible to enhance your voter-service role by working together as a MAL Unit—and with the growth of the unit, to ultimately apply to become a chartered local League.

If you are a MAL, please ensure that Membership Manager Lisa Fry has your current email address. You can reach her at membership@lwvohio.org ; --or better still, call her toll-free at **1-877-LWV-OHIO**. She is your link to all of the possibilities awaiting you in League.

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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(877) LWV-OHIO (598-6446)
www.lwvohio.org

Nike Mendenhall • Nina Sabrack
 Cincinnati Areas Toledo-Lucas County

Donna Marie Lossing Jones
 Marion

Vivienne Himmell • Ardith Keck
 Greater Dayton Area Akron Area

Vickie Ewald • Chris Driver • Meg Flack
 Perrysburg Area Hudson Metro Columbus

Deborah Schmieding
 Treasurer/Athens County

Bonnie App
 Secretary/Cuyahoga Area

Karen Rainey
 Vice President/Delaware County

Rosanne Thomas
 Vice President/Hudson

Carol Gibson & Linda D. Lalley
 Co-Presidents/Cuyahoga Area & Shaker Heights

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Mary Cannon
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Lisa Fry
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Anne Nelson
 imPACT Project Manager

Jeff Fortney
 Contract Accountant

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

17 South High Street, Suite 650
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