



Winnebago Voter

January / February 2012

January / February Calendar

Monday, January 9th 6:30 to 8:30 PM
LWV Board Meeting, 1545 Arboretum Drive

Wednesday, January 11 11:45 am
Food for Thought Lunch, Vitale's 215 W. Murdock Ave.
*Winnebago County Sheriff, John Matz,
Update on a consultant's study of County
Jail, communications upgrade and reflections on his
beginning months as sheriff.*

Friday, January 20: 2:00 to 3:00 PM
WI Voter ID Law Information (*See page 3*)
Menasha Senior Center, 16 Main Street, Menasha

Saturday, January 21: 9:00 AM – Noon
Lively Issues Potluck Brunch at Coughlin Center

Thursday, February 2, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
Voter ID Law Information Session
Oshkosh Public Library, 106 Washington Ave.
WI Govt Accountability Board staff members will explain the ins and outs of the new Voter ID law. (*See page 3*)

Wednesday, February 8 11:45AM
Food for Thought Lunch
Vitale's 215 W. Murdock Ave.
*Ray Maurer, Oshkosh Parks Director
Oshkosh Comprehensive Parks, Recreation Plan*

Saturday, Feb. 11 9:00AM
LWV Breakfast
Remington's, 123 E. Wisconsin St, Neenah

Monday, February 13th 6:30 – 8:30 PM
LWV Board Meeting; 2033 Menominee Drive



Lively Issues Brunch

Saturday, January 21 9:00 AM – noon
Coughlin Center, 625 E. County Rd Y

Bring your ideas for new local study and action topics. Bring a tasty brunch dish to share. Table service and beverage provided.

This is the meeting to look over our current local positions and develop new action and/or study positions for 2011. Local topics suggested at this meeting will be voted on at the May Annual Meeting

To review the current LWV Winnebago County Positions go to www.lwvwinnebago.org and click on "LWV Activities and Priorities" to find the link to "Local Positions May 2011."

National LWVUS positions, proposals and study topics will also be considered. To see one of the many that will be coming, go to page 7 of this newsletter. LWVUS Convention will vote in June.

Check out these web addresses:

www.lwvwinnebago.org

www.lwv.org

www.lwvwi.org

You can "friend" the state and national LWV on Facebook

United Way Executive Director Sue Panek Reports on LIFE Study

There was a lot of buzz in the fall of 2011 as Fox Valley Communities reported on the results of their LIFE studies. At the November lunch, Sue Panek, Executive Director of United Way, and a member of the board of the Southern Winnebago County LIFE Study, provided lunch attendees with charts and graphs showing how the southern portion of Winnebago County fared in its study. (pictured, right Jeanne Bredbeck and Sue Panek)



LIFE studies have been going on since 1994 and are funded by ten agencies. LIFE is an acronym for “Leading Indicators for Excellence.” The local study sponsored by the Oshkosh Foundation and United Way along with a few other organizations partnered with St. Norbert College and UW Green Bay for statistical data. For the first time, community members provided survey data.

Community members and local leaders were asked to rate Southern Winnebago County in terms of recreation and leisure opportunities, providing effective education, providing for safety of residents, meeting health needs of residents, quality of natural environment, arts and cultural opportunities, living together as neighbors, caring for vulnerable persons, meeting needs of the poor and building a strong economy. In all but the last two named, the ratings were in the “Good” range of 3.0 to 3.4 on a four-point scale. The last two came in at 2.65 and 2.7, which is at the high end of the “Fair” grade.

I found the complete life study information online by Googling “Southern Winnebago County LIFE Study.”

“Whatever Happened to Good Government in Wisconsin?”

Monday, November 7: “What Ever Happened to Good Government in Wisconsin” public forum co-sponsored by Winnebago County LWV, Common Cause, UW Oshkosh Political Science Department and others. A packed ballroom in Reeve Union listened to State Senator **Jessica King** (D-Oshkosh), State Representative **Richard Spanbauer** (R-Oshkosh), Program/News Director - WOSH Radio & former GOP candidate for the State Assembly **Jonathan Krause**, Political Science **Professor James Simmons** of UW-Oshkosh, Communications **Professor Tony Palmeri** of UW-Oshkosh, and Executive Director **Jay Heck** of Common Cause in Wisconsin. Panel members addressed these topics: How will the **U.S. Supreme Court’s** *Citizens United* decision affect Wisconsin? Is **public financing** of our state elections needed? Will the new **Voter Photo ID law suppress voter fraud or voters?** Is **disclosure** of interest group “**phony issue ads**” and other “**outside**” **spending** necessary or would it stifle “free speech”? **Redistricting reform** in Wisconsin—how do we do it?

League to Hold Forums on New Voter ID Bill

The confusion, misinformation, and constantly changing rules have voters' minds in a spin on the new statewide Voter ID bill. Leagues across the state have been holding public meetings on these bills, particularly on how voters without proper identification materials can secure them in time for the elections. The Winnebago County LWV has set two informational meetings on the new Voter ID bill. The public is invited to these meetings.

The first one is on **January 20 from 2 to 3 PM at the Menasha Senior Center**, 16 Main Street, Menasha. Facilitating the meeting are League members Peggy Cox and Connie Kanitz.

The second meeting will be in Oshkosh at the Oshkosh Public Library on Feb. 2 from 6:30 to 8:00 PM. This meeting, also open to the public, will have a staff member of the WI Government Accountability Board present to explain how the bill has changed voting in the state and how voters lacking the necessary identification can secure it in time for the election. This meeting will be held in the large meeting room of the library.

At both meetings these questions will be addressed:

- What if I don't have a Wisconsin Driver's license?
- How do I get a birth certificate?
- How do I get a valid Voter ID if I don't have a driver's license?
- What are the new rules for absentee ballots?
- Elderly and voters with disabilities special rules

One of the main tenets of the LWV is that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. Therefore, League members promise that questions will be answered or they will point voters in the right direction to secure the necessary papers for voting.

State League Provides Information on Voter Registration

(The following is an excerpt from an email sent to League members by Andrea Kaminski, Executive Director of the state league)

Make sure you have a valid ID by checking what you have against the Government Accountability Board's website (<http://gab.wi.gov>). Most voters will use a Wisconsin driver's license. If you have an acceptable ID, help out a relative or neighbor who needs one. If you don't have an ID, contact your local clerk or the League of Women Voters about how to get one.

Once you are sure your ID will work, check the GAB's Voter Public Access website to confirm your voter registration and polling place. Seek reliable information about the candidates from sources that do not have a stake in the election. Don't believe everything you hear in 30-second ads on television.

(Editor's Note: A few days ago I decided to confirm my voter registration and I clicked on the above site. I typed in my name and date of birth and learned that the state has no record of me as a voter! Yikes! I've voted in nearly every election here since we moved here in 1966 and have been the captain of a polling place for the last ten years. Next I checked my husband and son's registration and they are listed. I have emailed the GAB and the Oshkosh city clerk to learn if I need to re-register. So, do take the time to check on your own registration! My city clerk checked and assured me that I was indeed registered and she sent proof in an attachment. Great clerk! The next day I heard from the GAB who told me that my birthday was wrong. The GAB also notified Pam, Oshkosh's city clerk, who called me. I told her the true DOB and she corrected it. All is now well.

Another easy and quick thing to do is to check your driver's license for the date of expiration.)

Winnebago County LWV Supports School Board Referendum on Oaklawn School

The Board of the Winnebago County LWV met in a special session on Monday, December 5 to discuss what position we would take on the proposed referendum on Oaklawn School. We discussed both proposals: the one to purchase land north of the city on Bowen Street (County Trunk A) and build a school there or the one favored by the staff and parents of Oaklawn students to build the new school on the present grounds of Oaklawn school on Viola Street. We unanimously chose the second option. As a result, Kathy Propp, co-president, made the following statement at the December 7th Oshkosh Area School Board Meeting.

Oaklawn School Statement Dec. 7, 2011

I am Kathleen Propp, 1936 Hazel St., co-president of the League of Women Voters. The League of Women Voters of Winnebago County supports the Oaklawn School Design Team's recommendation to build a new elementary school on the current Oaklawn site. The League makes this statement on the basis of long standing support of quality education and educational facilities. Ideally decisions about the construction of a new building would be part of a district long-range strategic plan. However, Oaklawn students cannot wait any longer.

The community understands that the Oaklawn facility is inadequate and needs to be replaced. The Design Team wisely chose to recommend the current site. The alternative site on County A could be workable but has many of the same significant drawbacks as the twice-rejected Ryf Road site.

Although the current Oaklawn site is small, the proposed building design makes use of the space in a very effective way. The plan includes some green space and there is room for expansion when adjacent properties become available.

Rebuilding the school on Viola Ave will play an important role in revitalization of the neighborhood. The facility will serve as a neighborhood community center. A new housing development across the street may add elementary students to enrollment. Students will continue to be able to bike and walk to school. No additional busing will be needed. A new school on the current site will not contribute to urban sprawl.

Rebuild Oaklawn School on the current site – and move forward with the long-range strategic plan concurrently. The League of Women Voters reaffirms interest in participating in a strategic planning process that is transparent and includes broad community participation.



Pictured left is Oaklawn School. The newer portion is the brick and concrete block section on the left. The original portion of the school building is on the right.

December Food for Thought Lunch Centers on Accountability in Education

Quality education is term that comforts many parents, but exactly what does it mean? How is it assessed? Where's the accountability? Dr. Francine Tompkins (*pictured right*), director of the PK-16 Initiatives at the UW System Administration gave League members and guests a look at the difficulties and challenges of providing accountability to judge the quality of public education.



She began with a decade-by-decade overview of federal legislation that led to today's bushel basket of assessments and directives. Over the decades educators are getting closer to arriving at a true accountability of public education.

- 1965—Enactment of the first Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Civil rights movement prompted this landmark legislation. It created Title I, which was meant to ensure that all children received a quality education. Title I programs are aimed at catching those children who “fall through the cracks.” Head Start is part of Title I.
- 1972—Reauthorization of ESEA. Title I and all special education programs were “pullout” programs. Accountability rested mainly with Title I administration.
- 1981—The Commission on Excellence began to gather research on teaching and learning.
- 1983—Nation at Risk placed its emphasis on those entering the teaching profession. Assessment tests became popular, but despite a lot of data that was collected, how to make use of the data was unclear.
- 1994—Goals 2000 began the formalization of “Standards-Based Education.” Because of a lot of public opposition to national standards, this movement died. A shift to local districts determining how to reach the national standards improved the accountability.
- 2000—ESEA reauthorization popularly known as No Child Left Behind inaugurated a system of “punishing” poorly performing schools by labeling them as “failures.” Failing schools were to provide their students with the opportunity to enroll at a successful school. Large districts found this difficult to manage.

Through all these laws (and I have barely touched on their structure and influence) the problem has remained: How to educate administrators, teachers, and the public to address accountability.

The current method of assessing school is not accurate. The local achievement gap “is great, but ignored,” said Dr. Tompkins. She said twenty-five per cent of kids entering college are taking at least one remedial course—primarily math.

Wisconsin is working on a data system that might be in place by February 2012. The Design Team, headed by Governor Walker and State Superintendent of School Tony Evers, is working on three initiatives:

1. Draft a vision statement and framework to find out what works, what leads to success in schools, rather than merely identifying failing schools.
2. A teacher and principal accountability plan
3. Professional development programs for teachers. These not only need to be worthwhile professional development opportunities for teachers, but also financially supported.

Menasha Mayor Gives “State of the City” Address at League Sponsored Meeting (Article submitted by Carol Codner)

On Nov. 16th, Mayor Don Merkes (*pictured right, Vicki Lenz, Mayor Merkes, Peggy Cox*) gave a PowerPoint presentation about the city of Menasha, at the Menasha Library. Founded in 1874, the city has grown to a present day population around 18,000. The city has several major corporations including SCA Tissue and Sonoco. Menasha’s growth is occurring on the east side in the Lake Park area. The average Menasha home sells for a very affordable \$118,000 with city taxes of \$1178.



The biggest portion of the city’s budget is debt service, police and fire service, and public works. State revenues are down \$322,000. The savings from the reduced retirement contribution paid by the city is only \$57,000.

Menasha’s new police chief, Tim Styka, faces challenges of deteriorating and vacant property, lots of rentals (which means less community involvement), and drug trafficking. Helping with solutions to these problems are a Code Enforcement Unit (enforces ordinances to clean up property, junk, litter, etc. to preserve property values), a K9 Unit, which is effective at detecting illegal drugs, and a full-time Crime Prevention and Community Involvement officer.

In 2003, Menasha joined with Neenah to form a joint fire department which consists today of 63 firefighters. Menasha and Appleton also jointly respond to calls near each other’s borders, which gives a better response time to both municipalities, at the same time, saving the taxpayers from having to pay for multiple fire stations.

The Department of Public Works faces challenges of decreasing staff, deteriorating streets, increasing tipping fees, and increased service area. Menasha was one of the first cities to automate garbage pickup and recycling.

Challenges to the Menasha Health Department are increasing poverty, an aging population, and scarce funding. The Menasha Health Department has some unique functions besides being in charge of the city and school health programs and food safety. It also runs the Senior Center and is the weights and measures agency.

Sustainability is an important goal of the city, with new energy saving lighting installed on the streets and in city buildings. The new Menasha fire station will be certified LEED Silver and use solar panels. There are many bike lanes and trails with the goal of being accessible to all areas of the city.

Menasha Schools have the only K-12 World Language Program in the Fox Valley, teaching Japanese to students K-12.

The League of Women Voters of Winnebago County and the Menasha Library sponsored the meeting.

League Members to Discuss Alternative Sentencing and more at Lively Issues on Jan. 21

(This is the first of many proposals for concurrence or study and action that Leagues across the U.S. will bring forward this spring for consideration at the League's national convention in June. Since we have received this one before our newsletter deadline, we have decided to include it in the newsletter. We will notify members of others as they come along.)

We want to notify you that the LWVDC (Washington, D.C.) will sponsor the following proposal for concurrence at Convention 2012 in June:

"Sentencing Policy

(1) The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime.

(2) The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses."

A study published this month has revealed that up to 41% of young people in the United States have been arrested by age 23 for something other than minor traffic violations. The United States is the largest jailer of citizens per capita in the world, with enormous economic and social costs. Much imprisonment is due to harsh mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses. After imprisonment, a criminal record carries a lifetime of daunting obstacles to succeed as a productive citizen.

1) Please use this link (www.lwvdc.org) to find educational information about the proposed concurrence on the LWVDC website.

2) Then please print that information to read and consider during your League's Program Planning.

3) At Program Planning, we hope your League will recommend this concurrence on the LWVUS response form as follows:

Title: Sentencing Policy

Summary of concurrence: Alternatives to imprisonment and no mandatory minimum drug sentences.

Name of League position: LWVDC Criminal Sentencing

Location of League position: LWVDC.org

Thank you very much! Please let me know if you have any questions about this request.

Sharon Fratepietro

LWVCA (Charleston, SC)

843-670-307 sharoninsc@gmail.com

The Winnebago County League of Women Voters welcomes its new members:

Howard and Patricia Blades

Jeanne Bredbeck

Noreen & Barry Johnson

Fred & Judith Lilly

Vicki Lenz

Mary Olson

Anne Romond

The Winnebago Voter

1936 Hazel St.

Oshkosh WI 54901

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MISSION

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization of men and women, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Visit <http://www.lwv.org>, <http://www.lwvwi.org>, <http://www.lwvwinnebago.org>

Members receive the bi-monthly *Winnebago Voter, Forward* from LWV-WI, and action alerts. Meetings are open to the public. We believe open civil discourse is critical to protect democracy and move forward with positive reform.

League Membership: \$50 (\$75 for two in household), \$10 students, \$25 limited income)

Winnebago County Voter Subscription only: \$10.00.

Dues payable to: LWV Winnebago County, 1202 Algoma Blvd, Oshkosh 54901.

President Barack Obama
<http://whitehouse.gov>

Senator Ron Johnson
<http://ronjohnson.senate.gov>

Senator Kohl
<http://kohl.senate.gov>

Rep. Tom Petri
<http://Petri.house.gov>

Sen. Jessica King (18th Dist)
Sen.King@legis.wisconsin.gov

Rep. Gordon Hintz (54th Dist)
Rep.Hintz@legis.wisconsin.gov

Sen. Michael Ellis (19th Dist)
Sen.Ellis@legis.wisconsin.gov

Rep. Dick Spanbauer (53rd Dist)
Rep.Spanbauer@legis.wisconsin.gov

Rep. Dean Kaufert (55th Dist)
Rep.Kaufert@legis.wisconsin.gov

Gov. Scott Walker
<http://govgeneral@wisconsin.gov>

Wisconsin Legislative Hotline: 800-362-9472 Capitol Hill Switchboard 202-224-3121