



# Oshkosh Area Voter

## November / December 2008

### Calendar



**Tuesday November 4 Presidential Election**  
Polls open at 7 AM, Close at 8 PM Voters can register at the polls.

**Monday, November 10**  
**LWV Board Meeting 5:30 – 7:30 PM**  
1545 Arboretum Dr. #413

**Wednesday, November 12**  
**Food for Thought Lunch 12:00 PM**  
Vitale's Italian cuisine, 215 W. Murdock  
*Bette Lang, Interim Superintendent of Oshkosh Area Public Schools*

**Monday, November 17**  
**Redistricting Matters Forum**  
7:00 – 8:30 PM  
Reeve Union Theater, UW-O (*See page 3*)

**Wednesday December 10**  
**Food for Thought Lunch 12:00 PM**  
Vitale's Italian cuisine, 215 W. Murdock  
*Mike Lizotte, Director of Aquatic Resource Laboratory, UW Oshkosh*

**Tuesday, December 30**  
**LWV Christmas Party**  
**1910 S. Westhaven Drive**  
**5:30 to 7:30 Potluck**  
(*Last year for a real tree!*)

November 12

Food for Thought Lunch

**Bette Lang, Interim Superintendent**  
**Oshkosh Area Public Schools**

The 3-part Referendum  
Set for the April 7th  
Spring Election

Learn the school district's  
plans for a new North side  
elementary school,  
deferred maintenance projects,  
other additions and renovation.

**Open to the Public**

Vitale's Restaurant  
215 Murdock Street, Oshkosh

Tanya Melich to speak twice at Marian University,  
Fond du Lac (see p. 7 for details)

**Tues. Nov. 11, 11:00 am**

"Women in Politics"

Stayer Center Auditorium – plus –

**Thurs. November 13, 7:00 pm**

"Politics in the Daily Lives of Americans"

Stayer Center T205

## **Bill Topel, Director of Human Services for Winnebago County, Says Tax Levy Limits Are Severe**

Bill Topel, Winnebago County Director of Human Services Department, for exactly one year, gave an overview of services and budget constraints at the September 10 Food for Thought Lunch. The \$70 million department budget is funded mostly by federal and state grants; less than one fourth (\$18 million) is funded by the property tax levy. 75% of the budget goes to contracted services. About 260 employees administer more than 100 different programs, many of which are federal and state programs carried out by the county. These programs serve over 30,000 individuals or families in the areas of alcohol and drug abuse, mental health, financial assistance, child welfare, long term support, crisis services, aging, community and family support. County services are supplemented by excellent local agency services.



The impact of state property tax levy limits is severe. The department will receive less than \$200,000 in additional levy for 2009, but increases in staff salary and fringe benefits alone come to about \$1 million. Mr. Topel plans to address this budget shortfall by reducing provider costs. He is targeting two populations. He would like to reduce institutional placement of the mentally ill, developmentally disabled, drug and alcohol clients over the next three years. He would also like to keep children in homes as much as possible to reduce foster care and placement costs.

These changes should also result in better outcomes for clients.

One member inquired about the potential for lawsuits where the services are mandated by federal or state levels, but cannot be provided because of revenue shortfall. Winnebago County has one more year before there is a risk of non-compliance with federal regulations.

## **City Manager Mark Rohloff Outlines Priorities for City at LWV Meet & Greet**

Mark Rohloff enthusiastically supports City Council / City Manager form of government. His interest in it goes back to his late teen years in Cleveland, Ohio, when he wondered why the city government of Cincinnati, Ohio, worked better than that in Cleveland. His study showed that Cincinnati was thriving because it had a City Council and Manager while Cleveland struggled under a mayor / alderman system. Describing himself as a “government geek,” Rohloff earned an undergraduate degree in urban affairs from Saint Louis University and graduate degree in the same field at University of Kansas in Lawrence.

He outlined his city government careers in Long Beach, and Palos Verdes, California, then Berlin and the Town of Grand Chute in Wisconsin. At each of these places he learned new skills that help him today as a City Manager. He likes being involved in a full service community.



After this introduction, Mr. Rohloff outlined his concerns in regard to Oshkosh:

1. Storm sewers, infrastructure, storm water and streets. Mr. Rohloff explained that the city had to comply with storm water mandates from the EPA and the DNR to reduce pollution of TSS (total suspended solids) by 20 percent and later by 40 per cent. To do this means massive and regular street cleaning and construction of ponds and basins.
2. Downtown Redevelopment: Calling the Fox, a “gorgeous accessible river,” Mr. Rohloff thinks the remodeling of the convention center is “great.” He says the Park Plaza Hotel and the convention center is a priority of his. He has set plans to discuss TIF districts, especially one for Marion Road redevelopment, with citizens.
3. The budget. He sees “rough” times ahead because the state levy limits are going to put a “crimp on us.” Health insurance premiums for city employees are up 7 per cent and there is a half million dollar increase in fuel costs.

# REDISTRICTING MATTERS: How It Affects You!



Monday November 17, 2008

7:00 – 8:30 pm

Reeve Union Theater

748 Algoma Blvd

UW Oshkosh Campus



**The 2010 census will trigger legislative redistricting. The way the lines are drawn can keep a community together or split it apart, leaving it without a representative who feels responsible for its concerns. The way the lines are drawn can change who controls the legislature -- and which laws get passed. Join us to learn more.**

- **Do voters choose their legislators – or do legislators choose their voters?**
- **How are district lines decided and who draws those lines?**
- **Does the process need reform?**
- **Can citizens become involved?**

## **Panel Members:**

Dr. James Simmons, Political Science Dept., UW Oshkosh

Dr. Ed Miller, Political Science Dept., UW Stevens Point, and Co-chair Wisconsin  
Supreme Court Redistricting Committee

Former Representative Joe Handrick, Assembly District 34, Minocqua (Republican)

Representative Fred Kessler, Assembly District 12, Milwaukee (Democrat)

Representative Gordon Hintz, Assembly District 54, Oshkosh (Democrat)

**Public Forum open to all.** Parking in university lots 13, 15, 32 across Algoma Blvd.



League of Women Voters of Oshkosh Area  
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Fund  
Political Science Department – UW Oshkosh

Funding provided by The Joyce Foundation



## League Members Attend Democracy Summit, Meet LWV US President

Four Oshkosh Area League members (Carolyn Blassingame, Jeanne Shiras, Kathy Propp, Peggy Cox) attended the Making Democracy Work Summit in Stevens Point on Oct. 4. Keynote speaker was LWV US President Mary Wilson, who asked to sit at our table for lunch. She is very personable and an excellent spokeswoman for LWV. Her message to Oshkosh Area/Neenah Menasha Leaguers is simple. Whatever the election outcome on Nov. 4, League has its work cut out for the next congressional session. LWV US will call on our members to lobby senators and congressmen for our legislative priorities. Our voices will be more important than ever.

## Winnebago County Leagues to Merge

We are excited to announce the merger of the Oshkosh Area and Neenah Menasha (N-M) Leagues, to be named the Winnebago County League of Women Voters. The Oshkosh Area and Neenah Menasha League boards have voted to begin the merger process, to be effective by June 2009. Our merger request first goes to the LWV Wisconsin state board at their December meeting, and then on to LWV US for their approval. *Members will have a chance to ask questions about this merger at the Nov. 12 Food for Thought lunch.*

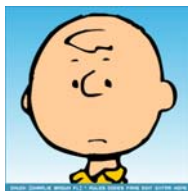
N-M president Peggy Cox and treasurer Carol Codner have been appointed to the LWV Oshkosh board effective Oct 13. N-M members are asked to join our proposed Winnebago County LWV this fall. Merged membership should be reflected in the Jan 2009 official tally. N-M League will pay its state and national Per Member Payment thru June 09 (based on last Jan 31 08 memberships). Oshkosh will do the same. In June 2009 we will merge bank accounts.

At our May 2009 Annual Meeting, LWV Oshkosh members will change the bylaws to reflect the new name, board membership, and anything else needed. We will also concur with the N-M local positions (after discussion at the early spring lively issues program meeting), many of which are the same. N-M members may recommend simply dropping a few of their positions. We will also need to update our web site.

Once we have national, state and local membership approval, we will begin using our new name, LWV of Winnebago County. Our challenge will be to expand our activities and programs to the Neenah Menasha area so that all members feel a part of our newly merged League. Welcome to Neenah Menasha members!

**Good Grief! You haven't forgotten to pay your dues, have you?**

Rush that check to Karen Boehning, 1202 Algoma Blvd., Oshkosh, 54901!  
Single membership \$45. Family membership \$70. Student membership \$10.



## “Redistricting Matters”

Catherine Turcer, Citizen Action of Ohio, has been active in Ohio redistricting reform. California and Ohio placed redistricting reform measures on the ballot that failed. The lesson from these experiences is the importance of voter education and the message itself. She recommended trying redistricting for oneself by playing the redistricting game at [www.redistrictinggame.org](http://www.redistrictinggame.org).

Virginia Martinez, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, noted the importance of an accurate and complete census count. The immigrant population fears that the 2010 census information will be used to target undocumented immigrants. All residents are to be counted, whether or not they are U.S. citizens. Personal information is to remain confidential. The census is important for decennial political representation and also for distribution of federal and state money. Virginia believes that a creative and adequately funded communication strategy is needed to educate minority populations about the census, its process, and the built in safeguards for personal information.

Peter Cannon, retired researcher with WI Legislative Reference Bureau, told the audience to “play the game.” Get involved early with local redistricting. Local wards are the legal building blocks for county supervisory districts, city councils, state legislative districts, and congressional districts. Ward lines should be drawn to fairly represent minority populations, community of interest, and other appropriate factors. Local gerrymandering happens without citizen attention. In the past, only professionals had access to adequate computers and software. Today’s software is much easier and less expensive and will run on personal computers. Peter encouraged LWV to get involved early and come to local governments and the legislature with well thought out alternative redistricting plans. Redistricting reform is very difficult because the legislators are drawing the lines to choose their own voters and ensure their re-election.

*Reported by Kathy Propp, Panel Discussion at Making Democracy Work Summit, Oct 4, 2008*

## Bill Sturm, City Forester, Talks about the Benefits of Trees

Bill Sturm, Oshkosh City arborist, described his role at the October Food for Thought lunch at Vitale’s. He is the caretaker of all the trees on parks, terraces and city property in Oshkosh. And he and his crew of four also manage the cemeteries; grant tree permits and planting service; remove sick, damaged, and dead trees; run education programs for civic groups; advise property owners on forestry issues, and manage horticultural programs in the city such as the flower beds.



The budget for the forestry department is small, including little beyond the salaries and benefits for the workers. What is left over covers the costs of materials and tools. Despite the money crunch, the forestry division plants about 250 trees a year. Much of the money for trees comes from other sources such as donations, grants from the DNR and a city owned nursery. The division works with the Oshkosh Southwest Rotary Environmental Beautification Committee, Progress Oshkosh’s Pride of Place Committee on a terrace tree program, ReLeaf Oshkosh, to help the city maintain its status as a Tree City.

Mr. Sturm, who sees trees as a “benefit, not a problem” explained the role of trees as “carbon capturers” in the battle against global warming. Also on the environmental front, he is thinking of putting a rain garden in the South Park parking lot.

TO: **Members of the League of Women Voters of the Oshkosh Area**

FROM: Kathy Propp, President

RE: **Opportunities this year**

Welcome to the 2008-2009 year! There has never been a time when our nonpartisan political organization was more relevant. Our commitment to “encourage informed and active participation in government, work to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy” makes us a respected, trusted asset in the Oshkosh area.

We have an ambitious agenda for this year. The purpose of this memo is to enlist your participation in LWV activities that are of interest to you. *We need everyone’s experience and talent to fulfill our mission and serve the community.* Below is an overview of our activities, a note concerning the time involved, and the current leader for the program.

Do you have talents to help LWV prosper and grow?

Did you join LWV to learn more about issues?

Did you join LWV to lobby for policy changes?

Did you join LWV to help voters?

Did you join LWV to inform the community about issues?

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*Please take a few minutes to read this note. Can you find an activity – or two – that interests you? Let us know where you would like to help. Reply to the contact name listed for more information. Do this now.*

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**ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES: Do you have talents to help LWV prosper and grow?**

1. Food for Thought Lunch: Vitales, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday noon *Dorry Wilner*  
Attend lunch monthly; help with speaker ideas and contact
2. Website maintenance: Two hour training; 2 hours/month to update *Kathy Propp*
3. Membership: Identify and recruit new members *Karen King, Fran Garb, Frankie Mengeling*
4. Plan Spring Fund Raiser: one meeting in Nov or Dec to generate ideas, help with speaker contact, invitations, publicity, facility contact, etc. *Kathy Propp*

**STUDY: Did you join LWV to learn more about issues?**

*Study committees usually have one hour-long meeting each month.*

1. Examine the Impact of State Levy Limits on Oshkosh City Services *Karen Boehning*
2. Review and expand our Oshkosh Parks and Recreation position *Jan Scalpone*
3. Would the National Popular Vote Compact be an effective way to elect the President?  
See the Oct. 2008 National Voter, page 16. *Kathy Propp*

**ACTION: Did you join LWV to lobby for policy changes?**

1. Respond to LWV WI and LWV US email action alerts.  
Occasionally call local elected officials. *Ann Marshall*

2. Sustainability: follow local developments

*Susan Nuernberg*

3. Follow Oshkosh school referendum

*Tina Haffeman*

4. Observer Corps: Attend meetings of the entities below as an observer only;  
wear your LWV button; alert LWV Board to issues; write brief summary for the *Voter*

a. School Board

*Tina Haffeman*

b. Winnebago County Board

c. Oshkosh City Council

**VOTER SERVICE: Did you join LWV to help voters?**

*Carolyn Blassingame*

1. Voter Registration: attend state training (2 hours); occasional 1-2 hour shifts

2. Candidate Forums: call candidates, send letters, timekeeper, question sifter, hostess, work with moderator (1-3 hours per fall and spring forum)

**VOTER INFORMATION: Did you join LWV to inform the community about issues?**

1. Redistricting Forum Mon Nov. 17: blue ribbon bipartisan panel

*Kathy Propp & Ann Marshall*

2. Spring Forum on School Referendum

*Tina Haffeman*

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**Contact information:**

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*(from page 1)*

**Tanya Melich** will speak twice at Marian University, Fond du Lac  
**Women in Politics, Tues. Nov. 11, 11:00 am**, Stayer Center Auditorium

**Politics in the Daily Lives of Americans, Thurs. Nov. 13, 7:00 pm**, Stayer Center T205

Tanya Melich, political analyst, writer, election reform advocate, and a nationally recognized authority on women in politics, co-founded the National Women's Political Caucus and led the fledgling National Women's Education Fund, the first organization to educate women systematically on how to gain political power. Formerly a Republican, she has managed state and local races; she is now a Jeffords independent.

**Call 920-923-8133 or [specialevents@marianuniversity.edu](mailto:specialevents@marianuniversity.edu) to RSVP**

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