



# Winnebago Voter

## November / December 2009

### November / December Calendar

**Thursday, November 5**  
**Views & Brews 5:00 pm**  
*Downtown Summit (see p.7)*

**Monday, November 9**  
**6:30 – 8:00 pm**  
**LWV Board Meeting**  
*1120 Olson Avenue*

**Wednesday, November 11 Noon**  
**Food for Thought Lunch**  
 Vitale's Italian Cuisine  
 215 W. Murdock Ave.  
**Melissa Kraemer Badtke, Coordinator**  
*Safe Routes to School*

**Monday, November 30 6:30 – 8:30 pm**  
**Oshkosh Public Library**  
*Steve Hintz on state levy limits/revenue sharing issue (See p. 7)*

**Wednesday, December 9 Noon**  
**Food for Thought Lunch**  
 Vitale's Italian Cuisine  
 215 W. Murdock Ave.  
**Christian Gossett, District Attorney**  
*Winnebago County*

**Tuesday, December 29**  
**5:30 – 7:30 pm**  
**Holiday Party (bring hors d'oeuvres)**  
*1707 Chestnut St. (See page 4)*

Check out our new web address:  
[www.lwvwinnebago.org](http://www.lwvwinnebago.org)

### LWV is selling OCMS cards!

**We earn \$4 per card.**  
**Call 231-4770 to get yours. Only a dozen left!**

The cards are ten dollars each. Flash this card at the following merchants and get a discount of at least 10%:

- Perkins
- Fine Country
- House of Flowers
- Hardees
- Two Brothers
- Schoenbergers
- Glass Nickel Pizza

Oshkosh Community Media Services



[www.OshkoshCommunityMedia.org](http://www.OshkoshCommunityMedia.org)

- Jade Dragon
- Terry's
- Jeff's on Rugby
- Murray's
- Durango's
- Sherman House
- Cousins'
- Cranky Pat's
- The Bar
- Biggars
- Delta
- Rocky Rococo
- Brooklyn Grill

**MON. NOVEMBER 30 6:30 PM**

### Oshkosh Public Library

Steve Hintz will lead a timely discussion on funding local services. What are levy limits? What is the role of state revenue sharing? How can the City of Oshkosh fund the local government services that its residents need? This discussion will apply to Neenah and Menasha as well.

## Assemblymen Hintz and Spanbauer Describe Legislative Session

Communicating with their constituents seems to be the one of the biggest problems that faces Assemblymen Gordon Hintz and Richard Spanbauer. Mr. Spanbauer, maybe with a touch of envy, compared Hintz's district within one city to his 21 municipalities. Both agreed that it's hard to reach the people who need to know what is going on in their state's legislature. They have weekly meetings within their districts, send out email newsletters, and Hintz, for one, gets his pithy messages out on Facebook. But the sparseness of newspaper coverage and the small circulation of the local newspaper hamper their ability to reach their constituents.

Hintz felt the biggest impact on the state is the economy, "whatever happens world wide affects us." He reminded us that a year ago September the state's deficit was 1.8 billion, but as times worsened, that grew to five billion which is 20% of the whole budget. There was, he said, "More demand for government during a down time." What also hurt Wisconsin was the lack of a rainy day fund. At least that would have cushioned the shortfall. "We passed a budget with the largest cuts ever," Hintz added.



However, Hintz pointed to four things the Assembly has done.

- ★ Passed a smoking ban which goes into effect on July 5, 2010. We are either the 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> state to have such a ban. (This was passed also in the Senate and signed by Governor Doyle.)
- ★ Passed drunk driving legislation 95-0.
- ★ Limited the "john doe" filing by inmates against correction officers. This provides protection for state employees
- ★ Passed legislation granting renters three months notice if landlord's building is foreclosed.

Currently Hintz is pushing for a payday lending percentage rate of 36 per cent. Wisconsin is the only state without a law regulating payday lending institutions. It did have an 18% rate which was repealed in 1995. The issue is getting a lot of press, but lobbyists who wish to keep the lending rate high are pressuring legislators. The state League, by the way, supports the Hintz bill.

Spanbauer has a bill AB104 on campaign finance reform. Currently campaign committees not based in Wisconsin don't have to list contributions from out of state. Spanbauer's bill would end that. He pointed out how both he and Hintz were victims of such out-of-state PAC's (Political Action Committees) which accused them of actions that they were innocent of and beliefs they did not hold. "How can a candidate defend himself from such campaign material?" Spanbauer asked.

Moderator Kathy Propp steered the conversation to another League position, that of electing State Supreme Court Justices. Hintz supports creating a public finance pool for Supreme Court races. The bill would increase the check-off on state tax forms. Two point four million dollars would be the maximum amount for each race. The Assembly is committed to getting this bill passed, Hintz said. Spanbauer would like to see a 60/40 for public/private financing for State Supreme Court justices.

On another League issue, Climate Change, both Hintz and Spanbauer spoke about alternative energy from windmills—a couple of large wind farms are in Spanbauer's district.

Hintz mentioned a 250 biomass burner being built in Madison. He added that solar panels are being put on the state capitol building, but not on the dome.

Another League issue is health care. Badger care is currently funded 70 % from the Federal Government and 30 % from the state. It was 60/40 until the stimulus money lowered the state's share. Every child under 18 is insured in Wisconsin, stated Hintz. On a related health issue, Spanbauer "doesn't have a problem with importing drugs from Canada." He also said the medical community needs to overhaul its records and do them electronically as this would reduce health costs. Both Hintz and Spanbauer supported legislation that requires insurers to provide coverage for autistic children.

The last League issue covered is our local study on the impact of state levy limits on local governments. Hintz said that nearly two-thirds of the state budget goes to local units: school districts, municipalities, counties and tech colleges. When the state cuts, local units such as school districts need to cut or raise property taxes. We can see this happening across the state now.

This meeting marked the second time the League has invited local representatives to share their views on statehouse matters. This year's meeting was held at the Senior Center on Sept. 21. Two years ago the meeting was held during the midst of the budget impasse.

## September Lunch Deals with Gearing Up for the 2010 Census

The "census is different" this year, began Susan Keplinger, Oshkosh City Planner at the September Food for thought lunch at Vitale's. Susan, who has led the city through three censuses, said that unlike former years there will be no long form. It used to be that one out of every six households received a long form which covered many questions that provided information to help city planners.

The 2010 census form is ten questions designed to be completed in 10 minutes. Ms. Keplinger said she is "really, really disappointed" that there will be no long forms. The American Community Survey which covers a very small slice of the population provides a lot of information, but it is only "estimates." *(Ed. Note: Marvin and I were part of the ACS in the mid 1960s when we lived in Hanawa Falls, New York, St. Lawrence County. This survey was done to aid in creating the poverty program of the Johnson administration.)*



Instead she says she is getting lots of "swag:" polo shirts, denim shirts, bags, baseball caps, etc. She handed out copies of the official census form from the U.S. Department of Commerce. It is only one page for the "head of household" asking for name, number of people living at that address, race, age, sex, etc. There is an additional page for others at that address which asks for their name, age, sex, date of birth and relationship to "person 1."

She is forming a Complete Count Committee of local people designed to reach people least likely to respond to census takings. She is using block grant money to assemble a committee of people from about 20 agencies who know where the "uncounted" or "hard to count" live. The city will go with a hybrid approach of government and grassroots people. League members volunteered at the luncheon to assist with the census.

She is meeting with these agency representatives to do a complete count. She wants to get those who are living in cars, couch surfing or living under the Main Street Bridge. The census is set for April 1.

*(Ed Note: Since the September lunch, Ms. Keplinger is no longer employed as City Planner. The League does not know who will be handling the census for Oshkosh.)*

## Researcher and Writer of *State of Drinking* Speaks at October Lunch

Wendy Harris, formerly a reporter for the *Appleton Post Crescent*, explained the research process and writing she did that culminated in the 5-part series *State of Drinking* that ran in the *Post Crescent* and other of Gannett's Wisconsin papers in 2008.

The work on the articles "pretty much consumed my life," for many months, she said. Wisconsin's problem with drinking "does get reported on a lot," but "just in bits and pieces." She was looking for a new perspective that wasn't "preachy." She looked for a statistical record, turned to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and used their basis, but added her own ten measures.



Here are nine of those 10 measures. The number in parentheses after them indicates Wisconsin's rank:

1. Heavy drinking / binge drinking (1)
2. Underage drinking (2)
3. Alcohol sales per capita (4)
4. How available is alcohol (liquor licenses per capita) (4)
5. Beer tax (3<sup>rd</sup> lowest in the USA)
6. Alcohol health cost (3)
7. Drunk & driving (11 at .08)
8. Alcohol dependent (5)
9. Crime: liquor law violations (4)
10. Oops never got No. 10

These articles and also those in the *Milwaukee Journal* created a "2008 media smack down," says Ms. Harris. She thinks this media blitz has pushed the State Senate and Assembly to create tougher drinking laws.

---

## Holiday PARTY

**DECEMBER 29 5:30 – 7:30 pm**

**1707 CHESTNUT STREET**

Soft Drinks & Coffee provided.

Bring a Holiday hors d'oeuvres or sweets.



---

Confused about all the "information" on major issues?

What's true?

What's made up?

Well, check the facts here:

\* <http://www.factcheck.org/>

\* <http://www.politifact.com/>

## State LWV Holds Issues Briefing October 10

Four Winnebago County LWV members attended the LWV Wisconsin Issues Briefing in Madison on October 10. They are Carolyn Blassingame, Carol Codner, Peggy Cox, and Tina Haffeman. The three sessions and lunch presentation centered on state League issues: Health Care, Climate Control and Election of State Supreme Court Justices. Also, the LWV of Greater Green Bay had a presentation on creating worthwhile questions for candidates' forums.

**Climate Change:** Ryan Schyver from Clean Wisconsin gave a presentation based on Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*—Wisconsin style. After presenting data showing that spring comes 22 days earlier now which has caused changes in animal behavior and plant survival Mr. Schyver suggested five general policies for the state:

- ➔ Triple the Focus on Energy Budget which has proven that for every dollar invested, the return is well over \$3.
- ➔ Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by 2% each year.
- ➔ Adopt cleaner transportation options.
- ➔ Increase renewable energy commitment by 25% by 2025.
- ➔ Create a market for carbon.
- ➔ For more information see [www.cleanwisconsin.org](http://www.cleanwisconsin.org).

**Health Care:** Presenter Dr. Robert Kraig, Citizen Action of Wisconsin, observed that health care in the US is “so fragmented that it cannot be considered a ‘system’ at all. He believes health care reform is needed as there has been a 130% increase in the cost of premiums since 1999. By 2016, the average family policy will cost \$20,000. He states that for real change, a health care bill must contain costs, be affordable, and allow choice. He described two Health Care Plans: Paul Ryan’s “Health Care Plan Sells Snake Oil to America” and “America’s Health Care Choices Act (H.R. 3200: A Historic Step Toward Health Care Reform. This latter plan

- Guarantees health security,
- Strengthens coverage at work,
- Creates quality affordable options outside of work,
- Outlaws worst insurance company abuses,
- Is paid for fairly,
- Provides affordable coverage for small businesses,
- Reduces prescription drug costs for seniors, and,
- Reins in the deficit.

For more information on each plan, click on [www.citizenactionwi.org](http://www.citizenactionwi.org)

**Judicial Selection:** “What Works in Other States”: Presenters were Damon Circosta, North Carolina Center for Voter Education and Beth Riggert, Missouri Supreme Court. Each discussed how judges were chosen in their states.

After State Supreme Court races in North Carolina became outrageously expensive, the state moved to public spending via a check off on state income tax forms and a \$50 limit on contributions from lawyers. The state also publishes a Voters Guide, content based on statute, which is sent to each household in the state. Further information on the North Carolina plan can be found here: [www.ncvoter.com](http://www.ncvoter.com).

The Missouri Plan has been adopted by 30 states; it grew out of political corruption in the 1930’s in Kansas City. Simply put, the state moved from partisan elections to nonpartisan election of judges. As the years have passed, Missouri has tweaked its nonpartisan election of judges to ensure fairness. Further information on the Missouri system can be found here:

[www.courts.mo.gov/page.asp?id=158](http://www.courts.mo.gov/page.asp?id=158).

**Crafting Questions that Differentiate Candidates:** Joyce McCollum of LWV Greater Green Bay led a break-out session on crafting questions for voters forums. At Green Bay forums—both those televised and not—audience members may submit questions on index cards. League members then group and edit the questions for the candidates. They keep in mind that speakers have very limited time to respond. As one who has participated in our local forums, I found their hints and suggestions valuable. I'm hanging on to their handouts!

*(Ed. Note: I am indebted to Tina Haffeman for most of the information in this article.)*

## **State League Sets up List Serves**

**Two New List Serves:** We recently set up 2 State League Groups that we hope will provide forums for LWV members to post and discuss news and events relating to these topics. The information is also posted on the LWVWI website in the "For Members" section in the right hand column.

### **Climate Change/ Sustainability Group**

Margi Kindig is the lead person and Joyce McCollum is a liaison to the Board located at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lwvwi\\_sustainability/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lwvwi_sustainability/)

### **Health Care Reform Group**

Linda Jorgenson is the lead person located [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lwvwi\\_healthcare/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lwvwi_healthcare/)

*(Ed. Note: List serves are a great way to stay up-to-date with these topics and also to add your two cents' worth.)*

## **Supreme Court Says No to Recusal Rule**

*(Ed. Note: The following article is excerpted from an email which I received on October 29. The Wisconsin LWV had entered an amicus curiae to this argument. Except for reformatting, this is the exact email. Also see the editorial in the Northwestern for Oct. 30)*

The state Supreme Court [October 29] denied the League's petition for a judicial recusal rule, as well as a similar petition offered by retired Justice Bill Bablitch. They granted verbatim the proposals submitted by two business groups, the Wisconsin Realtors Association and Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, stating that campaign contributions and independent expenditures to influence an election will not by themselves be cause for recusal.

This was exactly what Justice Bablitch told them would be the worst thing they could do, because it effectively memorializes the status quo into the code. Voting in favor were Justices Prosser, Roggensack, Ziegler and Gableman. Voting against the motion were Justices Bradley and Crooks and Chief Justice Abrahamson.

During the hearing the League of Women Voters was attacked by Justice Gableman as an extremist organization that wants to do away with judicial elections. (This is because we are studying issues related to judicial selection in order to update and strengthen our positions.)

Experts from the Brennan Center, Justice at Stake and Wisconsin Democracy Campaign provided thoughtful testimonies and offered suggestions for strengthening the League's proposal through nuanced amendments.... Now it is more important than ever that the "Impartial Justice" bill is on the move. Assembly Bill 65 and Senate Bill 40, which the League heartily supports, would provide full public financing for qualifying candidates for the Wisconsin Supreme Court who voluntarily agree to abide by a spending limit of \$400,000. These bills are headed for the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance for consideration on Monday, November 2nd, and from there may go to the full Assembly and Senate floors for a vote.

## The Ins and Outs of Revenue Sharing and Tax Levies

Steve Hintz, a consultant for local governments, will provide insight into the complicated issue of state shared revenue and local tax levies on **November 30, 6:30 – 8:30 pm** at the Oshkosh Public Library. Our local League study this year is the topic of state shared revenue and levy limits. What is the impact of these state programs on municipal services? Discussion of the state Shared Revenue Program will entail a brief look at the history of the state shared revenue program in Wisconsin and then a look at the shared revenue formula.

The shared revenue formula has changed a great deal over the decades. Steve will describe those changes made in the 1970s, 1990s and the last few years.

The meeting will also consider some recommendations made in recent years on alternative ways to finance local governments. They are limited in two ways;

- \* Historically: local governments are limited in the kinds of revenue they can raise. For example, they can raise property taxes, fees, etc. But they could not create local sales taxes or local income taxes. Counties, however, can have a .05% sales tax.
- \* More recently: The state imposes a limit on property tax levy based on the amount of property tax growth or a percentage (usually 2%).



### Talk. Listen. Learn...Enjoy.

#### DOWNTOWN SUMMIT: *Marketplace and Community Conversation*



November 5, 2009; Marketplace opens at 5:00 p.m.  
Conversation starts at 6:30 pm; FREE

City Center atrium (enter by Becket's restaurant)

#### JOIN US!

Promote your business, organization, or ideas to community members with a table in the Downtown Summit Marketplace

Tables are free if you're looking to promote and chat;  
\$10.00 if you're looking to sell non-food or drink items  
(sellers must be pre-approved)

Contact [squareonesoshkosh@yahoo.com](mailto:squareonesoshkosh@yahoo.com) to reserve a table or for more information

*(Ed. Note: We received information on Views and Brews quarterly via email. This is their third session. The following is from Square One's web page.)*

Square One's purpose is to develop programs that take concrete steps towards cultural integration, appreciation of diversity, and enhanced community vitality in the Oshkosh area.

Views & Brews is a new community event designed to get all kinds of people from the Oshkosh area together to talk about a serious issue (Views), but in an informal way, and in a setting where they can drink coffee or beer (Brews). We'll have a few panelists to give their brief thoughts and then encourage people to ask questions and discuss. Views & Brews will be held quarterly.

The Oshkosh 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. Meetings are open to the public. Those interested in government and public policy issues will find their intellectual home here.

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

**Winnebago County Voter Subscription only:** \$10.00.

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

President Barack Obama  
[President@whitehouse.gov](mailto:President@whitehouse.gov)

Senator Kohl  
[Senator\\_kohl@kohl.senate.gov](mailto:Senator_kohl@kohl.senate.gov)

Senator Feingold  
[russel\\_feingold@feingold.senate.gov](mailto:russel_feingold@feingold.senate.gov)

Rep. Tom Petri  
[tompetri@mail.house](mailto:tompetri@mail.house)

Gov. James Doyle  
[wisgov@mail.state.wi.us](mailto:wisgov@mail.state.wi.us)

Sen. Randy Hopper  
[Sen.hopper@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.hopper@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Rep. Dean Kaufert  
[Rep.Kaufert@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.Kaufert@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Rep. Gordon Hintz  
[Rep.Hintz@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.Hintz@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Sen. Michael Ellis  
[Sen.ellis@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.ellis@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Rep. Dick Spanbauer  
[Rep.Spanbauer@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.Spanbauer@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Wisconsin Legislative Hotline: 800-362-9472 Capitol Hill switchboard (202) 224-3121