



Winnebago Voter

May / June 2011

May / June Calendar

Wednesday, May 11 11:45

Food for Thought lunch

Vitales, 215 Murdock Avenue

*Oshkosh Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, David Buck,
Oshkosh Community Development Dept. Planner*

Monday, May 16, Annual Meeting 5:30

Becket's 1 City Center ←

**Wednesday, June 8 Food for Thought Lunch
noon**

Vitales, 215 Murdock Avenue

*Oshkosh School District Strategic Plan. Don Viegut,
Oshkosh Superintendent of Schools*

Sat June 11 Whitewater

LWV Wisconsin Annual Meeting

**Monday, June 13 LWV Board Meeting 6:30 –
8:30**

Zuppa's restaurant 1540 commercial Street,
Neenah

Wednesday July 13 11:45

Food for Thought Lunch

Vitales Italian Cuisine, 215 Murdock St.

*City of Oshkosh gifts and special events policies.
Speaker: Lynn Lorenson, Oshkosh City Attorney.*

WINNEBAGO COUNTY LWV ANNUAL MEETING

**BECKET'S RESTAURANT
501 CITY CENTER**

(Jackson St. at the River)

Social 5:30 PM

Dinner (order from a limited menu) **6:00**

Meeting 6:45

Meeting Agenda

- A. Local Program
- B. Nomination and Election of Officers
- C. Approval of the 2011-2012 Budget
- D. Bylaws Changes

Please come to the meeting to make your voice heard on proposals and changes in study and action for the next year.

Note: Information on the annual meeting was emailed and mailed to members in late April. Please bring this information with you to the meeting.

Check out these web addresses:

www.lwvwinnebago.org

www.lwv.org

www.lwvwi.org

Wisconsin Civics 101: Recall Procedures

Wisconsin is one of nineteen states that have established recall petitions within their state constitutions. The authority to perform a recall election is in Section 12 of Article XIII of the Wisconsin Constitution. This section was added to the state's constitution in 1926; it was amended in April 1981.

The right of recall in Wisconsin extends to all elective offices in the state, but only after the elected official has served a full year in his or her current term of office. This list not only includes members of the state legislature, but also the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Treasurer, Attorney General, Secretary of State and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In terms of local elected positions, the right of recall extends to incumbent elected officials of any city, village, town, town sanitary district, or school district in the state. In addition Wisconsin is one of nine states with provisions that say that the right of recall extends to recalling members of its federal congressional delegation, but it hasn't been clear whether federal courts would allow states to actually recall their federal politicians. I remember a recall petition that circulated during the Sen. McCarthy time that sought to recall him. I don't think it ever garnered the necessary number of signers to the petition.

In Wisconsin (and two other states) the number of valid signatures needed to recall a state senator is 25% of the number of votes cast for the office of governor in the legislative district. In the case of Senator Hopper (elected in 2008), that number is 15,269. The petition to recall Sen. Hopper is dated March 2. The closing date (60 days later) is May 2. Petitions go to the Government Accountability Board by that date or earlier (the petitions went to the GAB on April 7) where the signatures are checked to ensure that enough of them are valid to meet the minimum threshold for a recall election. The GAB has 31 days to check signatures. They make sure that the signers are citizens over 18 who live in the senate district (in this case). Then an election is held six weeks later. Talk is that an election could be held in late June.

The name of the targeted incumbent automatically appears on the ballot for the special recall election, unless the incumbent specifically declines to have his or her name on the ballot. Candidates who wish to run for the seat that will become vacant if the recall succeeds can collect signatures to have their name appear on the special recall election ballot. They will have two weeks in which to collect 400 signatures. According to Professor Simmons, officials who are recalled have 10 days to decide whether to defend their seats after the petitions have been confirmed by the GAB. Senators could choose not to run again in which case the governor could appoint a replacement. Or, he could ask other members of their party to file for the office and thus force a primary. If there were multiple candidates for a party, then there would be a primary election that would push the final election back even further.

According to §9.10(6), Wis. Stats., if an elected official, targeted for recall, retains his or her seat in a recall election, that incumbent officeholder cannot be targeted again for recall during the term of office in which the unsuccessful recall attempt took place.

As of April 19, three senate districts have sent recall petitions to the GAB well before the May 2nd deadline. However, the talk is that the GAB would like all of the recall elections to be on the same date. If that is the case, the GAB will probably wait until May 31 to certify that sufficient signatures have been received. Then the elections would be held by mid-July.

(Information for this article was found at <http://ballotpedia.com> and from Dr. James Simmons, professor in the political science department at UWO).

Are you getting your Winnebago Voter by email? Members receiving it by email can click onto links within the newsletter, see pictures in color and—most important—get it early! Starting in July I will send newsletters electronically to those members on my list by Adobe Acrobat pdf. If you still get yours by surface mail, consider the electronic form. Contact me at frankiemengeling@sbcglobal.net. Frankie

Craig Maher Talks about Local Governments Predicaments

Craig Maher, Associate Professor in the Masters of Public Administration Program at UWO, talked about the effect of Wisconsin's new budget on local governments at the March Food for Thought lunch. After receiving his PH.D. in public administration from UW Milwaukee, Dr. Maher (*pictured right*) worked for the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance in the late 1990s, a job that he said prepared him well for his current position. He has been at UW Oshkosh for ten years. A resident of Wauwatosa, he currently serves on its City Council.



After the appearance of his op-ed piece on effective municipalities in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the League decided to ask him to be our lunch speaker

He began his presentation with the “Big Question: Is Wisconsin Broke?” His answer, “Absolutely not.” He went on to say that Wisconsin has run a two billion or so deficit for many years. “Back into the Governor Thompson era.” The state’s thinking then was to make the deficit disappear by a unique accounting system, the use of tobacco settlement money, borrowing from the transportation fund and other devices, such as deferring payments into the following year’s budget.

“The state,” he said, “doesn’t provide many services, but is the money collector.” It then returns money to local units of government, primarily school districts, municipalities and counties.

He next demolished the myth that Wisconsin’s taxes are too high—or are among the highest of any state. He gave us these points “to chew on.”

No.	Revenue source	Rank among the 50 states
1	Combination of state and local revenues	39 th
2	Money from US entitlement programs	46 th
3	Property Tax	12 th
4	Sales Tax	Very Low*
5	Alcohol tax	Lower than most states
6	Tobacco	Very high
7	Income tax	15 th
8	Corporate Taxes	24 th
9	Licensing fees	22 nd

On the expenditure side, Wisconsin ranks 23rd. The state is below the national average in core services for K-12 even though it ranks 21st. Wisconsin used to rank 5th or 6th. In both higher education and in corrections, the state ranks 14th. In administrative spending it ranks 46th.

With the new budget cuts, there is a “big drop in K-12 funding. Corrections will outspend higher education.” These are situations he finds embarrassing and dismaying.

His argument is to change the way K-12 and local governments are funded. He argues that shared revenue could be cut by 50 per cent if the state did not limit so severely local governments ways of raising money. As an example, he said UW Madison is taking a “125 million dollar hit,” yet is limited by the state in decision-making and governance. He believes if UW Madison “cut loose” from the University System, it would have no problem raising tuition and retaining students and its high quality programs.

As far as the state’s proposed budget goes, “Municipalities actually fared the best.” Those that really got nailed are counties and school districts. He expects more school districts going to referendums as the budget bill “incredibly reduced flexibility.”

The question was raised about reduction in the number of government units, e.g., townships. This idea, voiced in Kettl commission reports, is “dead in the water,” he said. “We’re very parochial,” he added, “we want our city’s name on our police cars and fire trucks. We don’t want something that reads ‘metro’ or ‘area.’” However there are many conversations on sharing services. Eighty-five per cent of local governments are already cooperating with other governments in one way or another.

He bemoaned the fact that there is a lack of professionals running local governments. We need, he said, “Big picture people.”

*41st according to the state government www.revenue.wi.gov/ra/10txrank.pdf

Curious? Interested in the League of Women Voters?

Membership is open to women and men 18 years or older in Winnebago County. Dues are \$50 per individual, \$75 per household, \$10 per student, \$25 for limited income.

For more information contact Kathy Propp, President, jkpropp@earthlink.net or Fran Garb, Membership Chair, fgarb@new.rr.com.

Ready to Join Us?

Send this form to:

Karen Boehning, Treasurer: 1202 Algoma Blvd. Oshkosh 54901

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Storm Water Questions Answered

Dr. Maureen Muldoon, hydrogeologist and professor at UW Oshkosh, spoke about storm water management at the April 13th Food for Thought lunch. Dr. Muldoon (*pictured right*) is a member of the five-person Oshkosh Storm Water Utility Board and a member of the Campus Sustainability Council at UWO.



She began with the “the really big picture”—the enactment of the Clean Water Act in 1972 which addressed damages to lakes and rivers primarily caused by “point” pollution, that pollution caused by industries (say pumping waste directly into waterways) and municipalities with poor quality sewage treatment facilities. The act had three goals: waterways should be able

- to support aquatic life
- to be swimmable
- to be fishable

The act was successful in ending “point” pollution; lakes and rivers became noticeably cleaner.

However, the remaining problem, which is “non-point” pollution, was not addressed until 2000. Then the Clean Water Issues gave the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) power to regulate non-point pollution. Non-point pollution is runoff from lawns, parking lots, roofs, etc. In Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) carries out the EPA’s mandates. Any city over 100,000 population (city per se and surrounding area) must develop and carry out plans

to address the two issues of water quality (lessening the total of suspended solids, particularly phosphorus) and water quantity (flooding).

Cities created storm water utilities that could charge fees in order to generate funds to upgrade the storm sewer systems. These storm water utility fees are added into the water and sewer bills of residences, businesses and industries. Residences are assessed with a flat fee, but businesses (commercial, industrial, etc.) are assessed using a square footage formula that accounts for the amount of impervious surface area on a property. Impervious surfaces include the parking lots as well as the roof surface area of these buildings. In 2003 the Oshkosh Storm Water Utility Board was set up to handle appeals from industry and commercial businesses in regard to their assessments. Homeowners can find this fee stated on their water bill as “storm water.”

Interestingly, no appeals have been made to the Board, which now provides recommendation and advice to the City Council in terms of storm water management. The city has conducted a baseline assessment of the pollutant load generated by storm water runoff and is implementing the following Best Management Practices in order to reduce the quantity and improve the quality of the city’s storm water.

- Frequent street cleaning
- Catch basins
- Retention ponds
- Engineered swales (see these in the city parking lot east of the 400 block)
- Biofilters (rain gardens)

Dr. Muldoon would like to see the city increase education and outreach concerning storm water management. She would like to see landscaping with native plants and possible walking trails at these ponds and suggested signage describing how a retention pond works and why it is essential. She faults the city’s public works staff for not foreseeing residents’ objections to engineer’s plans for basins and retention ponds. A large task that the city has to do is find those homes where the storm and sanitary sewers are connected and have the storm sewer disconnected from the sanitary sewer. This is expensive and she is hoping the city finds a way to spread out the fees for this work for homeowners.

Residents can shrink the cost of their storm water assessment by creating rain gardens on their property.

Visit these websites to learn more about resident credits and rain gardens:

http://www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/Public_Works/Storm_Water_Utility/

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/runoff/rg/>

(The following is a press release from the City of Oshkosh. Since the League spent countless hours on a parks survey and is still involved in a signage project, this is a valuable survey for our members to take.)

City Seeks Input on Parks and Recreation Facilities

The Parks Department is inviting residents to take part in a citizen survey. The goal of the survey is to receive public input on current park and recreation facilities in the city of Oshkosh as well as future park and park facility needs. The feedback will be used as the Parks Department updates the city’s Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

The survey is available on the city website, www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us, under the Hot Topics section. Hard copies of the survey are also available at the Public Library reference section, Senior Center, Parks Department and City Hall in the City Manager’s office.

The deadline to complete the survey is May 31, 2011. Only Oshkosh residents are asked to complete the survey. All responses are anonymous. If you have any questions, please call the Parks Department office at (920) 236-5080. *(Ed. Note: I took the survey online. It takes about 10 to 15 minutes to do.)*

Carolyn Blassingame Named Mentor of the Year

Winnebago County League member Carolyn Blassingame (*pictured right*) was named Mentor of the Year by the Evening of the Stars, at the Oshkosh Community Foundation dinner and awards program at the Oshkosh Convention Center on April 13. "Stars" were chosen by the Foundation through nominations.

Letters supporting Carolyn's nomination stressed her involvement with refugees. A letter from Ralph and Carol DiBiasio-Snyder mentioned her work with a Kurdish family, refugees from Sadaam Hussein's regime. "Carolyn spent countless hours with [this family] taking them to register for schools and various programs, to doctor's appointments, job interviews, governmental agencies, refugee gatherings.... She helped them through the process, overcoming language and cultural barriers, negotiating 'red tape,' speaking up on their behalf."



The letter also commented on Carolyn's helping the Dinka people who moved into Oshkosh from war-torn Sudan. "Carolyn has been teaching a people from a very different culture to become contributing citizens of Oshkosh," the DiBiasio-Snyders wrote.

A second letter from Dorry Wilner, speaks of her role in assisting refugee "adults in navigating the complicated system of community support with visits to the Job Center, Winnebago County Human Services, medical appointments, immigration services in Milwaukee, legal services....She is known as 'Auntie Carolyn' to most of the current Kurdish and Sudanese families in our community."

Carolyn joined the League in the late sixties. She is the Voter Service Chair and as such sets up candidate forums and registration drives.

LWV Winnebago County Holds Four Candidates Forums for April 5 Election

Voter Service is one of the main goals of the League of Women Voters. With that in mind, the League sponsored four candidate forums in Neenah, Menasha and Oshkosh for candidates running in the April 5 elections.

The two Oshkosh forums were co-sponsored by Oshkosh Media Services and broadcast simultaneously on Oshkosh CitiCable 10 and Oshkosh Community Radio 101.9 FM. The first of these had candidates for mayor of Oshkosh and Oshkosh City Council. The second was for Oshkosh Area School Board and Winnebago County Court Judge Branch 6.

A forum at Neenah City Hall was for candidates running for Neenah City Council District 1. The Menasha forum, at the Menasha Senior Center, was for candidates running for Menasha City Council.

Should there be an election based on the recall of Senator Randy Hopper, the League will try to hold a forum for that race also.

LWV Wisconsin Annual Meeting, June 11, will be held on the UW-Whitewater Campus. Saturday's agenda runs from 8 AM to 3:30 PM and includes a keynote speaker, more training, and the Annual Meeting. Dr. Charles Franklin, a political scientist with UW-Madison as well as a popular commentator on TV stations in Madison is the keynote speaker. The title of his presentation is "Every Which Way But Forward: The Impact of Polarized Politics in Wisconsin." Convention delegates will elect new leaders, prepare programming for the coming year, approve the budget and revise the bylaws to be compliant with the proposed 501(c)(3) Group Exemption.

Members Attend Legislative Day April 12

(The following article was submitted by Kathy Propp.)

League members from around the state heard Jack Norman, Institute for Wisconsin's Future, talk about the need for state government revenue and a fair tax policy when making decisions about the governor's proposed 2011-2013 state budget. He made the case for a balanced approach that adds revenue in addition to making budget cuts.

His key points about taxes:

- Wisconsin is not a tax hell. Wisconsin taxes are average in the U.S. and have stayed flat for years. Sales tax is the lowest in the region. The state/local tax bite is trending slightly down as a percent of Wisconsin income (since 1977).
- Federal taxes are at their lowest in 50 years as a percentage of GDP (gross domestic product).
- U.S. taxes (federal, state, local) as a percentage of GDP are low compared with other market economies (4th lowest of 33 industrialized countries)

After lunch, Carolyn Blassingame and Kathy Propp chose to visit the office of State Rep. Robin Vos (R), Burlington, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Finance. Because the Assembly was in session, we met with his staff member who listened attentively to our LWV positions on voter ID bill, the need to consider both revenue and budget cuts in balancing the state budget, Senior Care, power shift to the governor, Focus on Energy, the need for a transparent redistricting process later this year, funding for Supreme Court Justice campaigns, and more. She did tell us that Rep. Vos wants to retain state support for recycling but did not share any of his other budget positions.

The public now has limited access to the Capitol building through two small basement doors, one person at a time through a metal detector while four capitol police officers search bags and purses. This process added at least 20 minutes with some 25 people waiting to enter when we arrived.

University Leadership Fellowship for Equity and Affirmative Action

(I am pleased to include this announcement in our newsletter. Karen King is a member of the League.)

Dr. Karen King will serve as the University Leadership Fellow, Office of Equity and Affirmative Action, for the academic year 2011 at UW Oshkosh.

Dr. King has been a faculty member in the Department of Public Affairs since 2004. She was the Coordinator of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) for five years where she was engaged in all aspects of running an academic program.

As the University Leadership Fellow in the Office of Equity and Affirmative Action, Dr. King will provide leadership and support on projects including workplace training and professional development, Civility in Everyday Life initiative, Social Justice Week programming and review of administrative and governance policies.

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. Randy Hopper (18th Dist)
Sen.hopper@legis.wisconsin.gov
Sen. Michael Ellis (19th Dist)
Sen.ellis@legis.wisconsin.gov

Rep. Gordon Hintz (54th Dist)
Rep.Hintz@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