

# The Akron Voter

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March 2013



## President's Remarks by Tina Merlitti

"Every child deserves a high-quality education regardless of where they live, their circumstances or their own unique learning traits. It is essential for helping them get good jobs in the future, reach their God-given potential, and create the jobs-friendly climate that helps Ohio get back on track." Governor John R. Kasich

The Governor is right! However, it seems that no one has been able to translate this sentiment into dollars and cents. For more than 20 years we have continued to have the debate about the definition of adequate and equal when it comes to funding our schools. Governor Kasich is not the first Governor to face this question, yet it seems that education does not make the number one priority on anyone's budget list but

seems to collect the crumbs of what is leftover once other projects have divided up the pie. I think part of the problem is our push for instant gratification in our election system. Public education is a long term investment whose legacy may not be realized until many years down the road, maybe even well beyond the living years of the current administration. It would require a sacrifice of other "sexier" endeavors to actually fix the system based on the multitude of studies and research on the subject.

The burden continues to weigh more heavily on the property tax base which has been decimated by the recession. This creates a hardship on the homeowner, many of whom have just paid their property taxes and are seeing the continued rising cost of our public education system. In their hearts, many people want to support our schools but a "no" vote on the local level seems to

be their only avenue of protest.

Reduction in funding from other sources also adds to the problem. According to a report by Policy Matters Ohio, current state funding for schools is about \$1.8 billion less than the previous two years. The reduction in funding is a result of the following:

- The expiration of federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- A decrease in federal funds for poverty and special education and programs
- A decrease in projected lottery profit revenue
- A reduction in property tax reimbursements to compensate school districts (and local governments) for the loss of tangible personal property tax revenue, which was eliminated as part of an overhaul of Ohio's tax system. Overall the amount of state revenue that is available to support state services has been reduced by about \$5 bil-

lion over the biennium as a result of the tax changes approved in 2005.

In addition, school districts are paying out more funds than they are receiving from the state to charter schools and private schools. These programs were designed to create competition and make our schools more competitive but that has not happened. School funding formulas are deceiving because this money looks like it is going to our local school district but actually follows the student to these other educational programs.

We need to continue to put pressure on the Governors' Office and our legislators to see the light. School funding needs to move to the top of the priority list.

*Tina*

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## Action and Advocacy

LWV Ohio conducts all-member conference calls on the first Tuesday of each month. Last month, the call was on the subject of human trafficking.

The next conference call will take place on Tuesday, March 5 from 12 noon to 1 PM. The subject is redistricting. Ann Henkener, Ohio League's vol-

unteer lobbyist on redistricting, will provide an update on redistricting reform, what happened in November and December, 2012, and plans going forward.

Participating in this call can give you an opportunity to learn more about this incredibly important but often little

understood issue, as well as to learn more about what LWV Ohio's plans are on this reform, one they have been working on for decades.

To take part in the call, call toll-free 866-740-1260 and enter PIN # 4691505.

## Board Briefs

by Martha Lester, Secretary

*Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 5:30 pm at Christ United Methodist Church, 380 Mineola Ave. in Akron and are open to the public. The next board meeting will be Thursday, March 7, 2013.*

### LWVO Regional Meeting

On March 2, LWVAA hosted some 40 League members from around NE Ohio at Akron's Main Library for discussion of and input into LWVO's proposed 5-year strategic plan.

### Membership

As of January 31, LWVAA reported a total membership of 91 for the LWVUS annual numbers report.

### Program Planning

The board reviewed the recommendations of members attending Program Planning on January 19, and approved the report to be sent to LWVO. Included was a proposed study on changing the legal status of marijuana. The board also expressed support for LWV Northern Portage's proposed study on hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." At the local level, a review of LWVAA's position on water quality and usage was recommended.

### Newsletter

LWVAA is currently participating in the USPS online tool for bulk mailings. The goal is to eliminate the bulk mail fee of \$190 per year. All mailings under the same permit in the calendar year must have bar-coded mailing labels or the fee will have to be paid.

### Calendar

Health Care Reform: What's Ahead?  
Thursday, March 14 at 7:00  
Unitarian Universalist Church  
3300 Morewood Rd., Akron.

### We always welcome members to become involved:

- ★ Be an Observer at public meetings
- ★ Staff a Voter Education or Registration table
- ★ Attend a panel discussion or candidates forum
- ★ Talk to people you know about what we do
- ★ Sign up new members



## Did You Know — Alice Paul

by Maureen Sullivan

Born on January 11, 1885 in Moorestown, New Jersey, Alice Paul grew up Quaker and attended Swarthmore College. Paul's parents were Hicksite Quakers and raised her with a belief in gender equality and the need to work for the betterment of society. She did her graduate work at the University of London, then returned to the United States to get her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1912.

While in England, Paul took part in protests for women suffrage, including taking part in hunger strikes. She brought this sense of militancy back to the United States where she organized rallies and ended up imprisoned three times.

In 1912 Paul and two friends headed to Washington D.C. to organize for suffrage. They organized an elaborate parade up Pennsylvania Ave. that coincided with Woodrow Wilson's presidential inaugura-

tion. The parade was led by activist and socialite Inez Milholland dressed in Greek robes and astride a white horse. The scene turned ugly when scores of male on-lookers attacked the suffragettes, first with insults and obscenities and then with physical violence while the police stood by and watched. The next day, across the nation, suffrage became a popular topic of discussion among politicians and the general public.

In 1916 Alice Paul established the more militant "National Women's Party." President Wilson's government began imprisoning demonstrating members of the party; between 1917 and 1919 a total of 170 women were imprisoned under inhumane conditions. Paul spent much of her prison time in the psychiatric department of a prison where she was force-fed because of her hunger strikes. The plight of the imprisoned demonstrators is depicted in the movie *Iron Jawed Angels*.

In August 1920, on the strength of Alice Paul's commitment, the Congress introduced a general right to vote in the U.S.A, which was ratified by the states as the 19th Amendment on August 26, 1920.



In 1923, on the 75th Anniversary of the Seneca Falls convention, Paul announced that she would be working on a new constitutional amendment calling for absolute equality. Her Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was introduced in every session of Congress from 1923 until it passed in 1972. The amendment went to the states for ratification but fell short by three states of the 38 needed.

Alice Paul died on July 9, 1977 in Moorestown, NJ just a few miles from where she was born.

More information about the League of Women Voters or LWVAA, plus updated information on meetings and events can be found at: [www.lwvaa.org](http://www.lwvaa.org) or

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Facebook

## Women's History Month

by Erica Greer

The month of March has been designated Women's History Month since 1987, with the goal of honoring the contributions of women throughout American history.

This year's theme is *Women Inspiring Innovation Through Imagination: Celebrating Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*. Out of 115 nominees, 18 women were chosen to be honored as extraordinary visionaries and role models in the STEM fields, where women are noticeably underrepresented.

Among the 2013 honorees are:

**Elizabeth Blackwell** (1821-1910), the first fully accredited female doctor in the United States. Along



with her sister Emily, she founded the first medical school for women, increasing the acceptance of female physicians and raising standards among medical schools overall.

**Patricia Era Bath** (1942—), ophthalmologist and inventor. She was the first African-American woman doctor to receive a patent for a medical purpose, for her Laserphaco Probe, an important innovation in laser cataract surgery.



**Mary G. Ross** (1908-2008), the first known Native American female engineer. She followed a career at Lockheed designing missiles and rockets, as well as systems



for human space travel and interplanetary missions to Mars and Venus, with a second career as an advocate for women and Native Americans in the fields of engineering and mathematics.

**Katherine Burr Blodgett** (1898-1979), the first woman awarded a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Cambridge (1926). As the first woman scientist at General Electric's Schenectady laboratory, she received eight patents for various inventions, including one for low-reflectance "invisible" glass. This technology is widely used today in camera lenses, computer screens, eyeglasses, etc.



For information about other honorees, visit the National Women's History Project website at [www.nwhp.org](http://www.nwhp.org).

## Sunshine Week

by Erica Greer

The following information about Sunshine Week is taken from the Sunshine Week website, [sunshineweek.rcfp.org](http://sunshineweek.rcfp.org).

Sunshine Week is a national initiative to promote a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include news media, civic groups, libraries, nonprofits, schools and others interested in the public's right to know.

The **Florida Society of Newspaper Editors** launched Sunshine Sunday in 2002 in response to efforts by some Florida legislators to create scores of new exemptions to the state's public records law. FSNE estimates that some 300 exemptions to open government laws were defeated in the legislative sessions that fol-

lowed its three Sunshine Sundays, because of the increased public and legislative awareness that resulted from the Sunshine Sunday reports and commentary.

Several states followed Florida's lead, and in June 2003, American Society of News Editors hosted a Freedom of Information Summit in Washington where the seeds for Sunshine Week were planted.

With an inaugural grant from **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**, which has continued to support the effort, Sunshine Week was launched by the **American Society of News Editors** in March 2005. This non-partisan, non-profit initiative is celebrated in mid-March each year to coincide with James Madison's birthday on March 16.

People in and out of the news business use state and federal Freedom of Information laws constantly to find out what's happening in their communities and to hold public officials accountable.

A recent example of how journalists used public records to shed new light on government actions and community issues comes from *The Pocono Record* of Pennsylvania. A year-long search of public pay records by reporters showed that among government workers in the area, more than twice as many men as women earn over \$100,000 a year and the median salary for men was 11% higher. Even jobs traditionally dominated by women, like teaching, paid men more.

## Notable Quotable

"I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality."

Alice Paul (1885-1977)



# LWV Ohio Position on Human Trafficking

*from LWVO*

Also known as modern-day slavery, human trafficking has become a major human rights problem in Ohio and elsewhere.

LWV Ohio adopted a state study of human trafficking at its convention in May 2011. In 2012, Leagues across Ohio participated in a consensus process to form a League position on this issue. Consensus was reached, and the LWVO Board formally adopted a position on human trafficking last year.

### Position on Human Trafficking:

League of Women Voters Ohio believes that:

1. Human forced labor and sex trafficking should be stopped through legislation and changes in public policy.
2. Victims of human trafficking should be provided with services on an as-

needed basis to facilitate integration into the community, including but not limited to counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, safe housing, physical and mental health care, legal representation, job training, ESL/GED/education and employment assistance.

3. Minors who have been commercially sexually exploited or forced into slave labor should be legally considered as victims and given special physical and mental health care.
4. Cooperation and collaboration among state and local agencies is necessary to enforce prohibitions and prosecute traffickers and other offenders (consumers).
5. There should be aggressive enforcement of laws dealing with traffickers and offenders (consumers).

6. Strategies to reduce the demand for commercial sex and forced labor trafficking should be employed by law enforcement agencies and the courts (an example would be court-ordered attendance at “john schools”).
7. Training and education of the public, law enforcement, and service providers should be widely available.
8. Funding (state and local) should be provided as necessary to treat victims, prosecute traffickers and consumers, and enhance awareness of the issue through training.



# LWVUS Disappointed in SOTU on Election Rights

*Elisabeth MacNamara*

*The following is from LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara’s blog. While League was pleased with much of Obama’s State of the Union message, it was unhappy with his treatment of voting rights issues (see below). For all of LWVUS’s reaction to President Obama’s State of the Union Address, please visit [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).*

“We were disappointed by the President’s response to improving the nation’s elections. Given his recent statements calling for reform, we anticipated bold action and real solutions –such as those found in our four-point plan to make elections free, fair, and accessible for all eligible citizens.

Last night Desiline Victor, a 102-year-old Florida woman who waited three hours to cast her ballot last November, attended the SOTU, and in the next couple of weeks, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a case challenging the Voting Rights Act of 1965. What better time for the President to call for concrete solutions to improve our elections? Rather than kick the can down the road by appointing a commission, which may take years to offer their solutions, the President would have served voters better by calling for secure online voter registration, portable voter registration and expanded early voting.

Every four years voters complain of long lines and every four years, nothing happens. This year will be no exception despite the fact that there are a number of efforts that the President could undertake immediately to protect voting rights, such as ordering the Department of Justice to fully enforce the existing election laws. We expected action to protect Americans from the risk of disenfranchisement, but we fear that all we got was lip service.”



**The deadline for the April Akron Voter is March 15. Please send any materials you may have to Akron Voter Editor Erica Greer at [erica@greerzone.com](mailto:erica@greerzone.com), or via mail to 408 Ott Dr. Clinton, OH 44216**



# Member Spotlight on.....Shelley Blaho

### When did you join the League?

I actually joined on Election Day, 2012.

### Why did you join LWVAA?

I had a friend who needed help finding her polling place, so I Googled it, and the LWVAA website came up. I read some of the information and the mission statement, and I said, "That's *my* mission too!" Also, on Election Day, I was mistakenly given a provisional ballot, but fortunately I knew enough about it that I was able to demand that I get a regular ballot. The poll worker said my information must have changed, or that I wasn't registered, but I knew that wasn't the case. I really had to fight for it, and I succeeded in the end, but I couldn't help wondering how often that happens, and how many people wouldn't know they could stand up for their voting rights as I had had to do.

### What issues would you like to see the League focusing on?

I think voter suppression efforts are very

real, so preventing that needs to be one focus. I also think redistricting is very important, so I'm glad the League is working on that too. I'm also very concerned about environmental and conservation issues.

### What do you find most rewarding about being a League member?

Well, I've only been a member for about three months, but I was really impressed at the program planning meeting to realize how many issues there are that I'm really uninformed about. So I guess I would say that I feel like League will help me make a contribution by helping me to inform myself.

### What do you think is the biggest issue voter's face?

I believe it is getting factual information, both about voting rights and also information about candidates and the issues.

### Are you involved in any other

### community organizations?

This is the first year I have volunteered with the Polar Bear Jump at Portage Lakes. And no, I didn't jump, I just helped out with it! I also belong to the Sierra Club local chapter, the Portage Trail Group.



### What interests do you have outside of the League?

I belong to the Portage Lakes Rowing Association. That's another reason I volunteered with the Polar Bear Jump, as those organizations around the Lakes like to support each other. I am a member of The WAPS, 90.1 I do a lot of walking, I like to travel, and belong to a book club. I also enjoy gardening, shopping, decorating, and cooking.

## Maureen O'Connor Headlines Statehouse Day!

*from LWVO*

*LWV Ohio Statehouse Day 2013 is Tuesday, March 19 at the Riffe Center in Columbus, Ohio. Statehouse Day is a wonderful day spent learning about State League's activities, exploring various current issues, and networking with other League members. I guarantee you will return home enthused and energized!*

*Mark your calendar and make plans to attend. We usually have a group carpool to Columbus, cutting the cost and reducing parking hassles.*

*The Editor*

Here are the details from LWV Ohio:

**When:** March 19, 2013, 9:30 am - 4:00

pm -- with registration beginning at 8:30

**Where:** Statehouse Day will once again take place at the Riffe Center, 31st floor conference center, at 77 S. High Street, Columbus, OH 43215. The luncheon will feature the keynote speaker, Maureen O'Connor, Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, and will take place next door at the Capital Club.

**What:** The event program includes many of this spring's hottest issues -- the state government budget and tax plan, changes to education funding, implementation of the federal health care law, and the latest updates on redistricting reform. Meetings

with legislators will be scheduled throughout the day upon request. Additional details will be announced soon.

**Registration fee:** As in the past— \$35 for members, \$40 for non-members, and \$20 for students— includes lunch and continental breakfast.

*NB: there is money in the LWVAA budget to send 3 members to Statehouse Day on a first-come-first-served basis. Please contact Tina Merlitti at 330-724-2520 or tinamerlitti@gmail.com if you are interested.*



**Don't forget: LWV Ohio Convention, "Energizing Democracy: What Would Alice Do?"  
May 4-5 Cleveland Downtown-Lakeside Doubletree Hotel.**

**If you are interested in attending, please contact Tina Merlitti at 330-724-2520 or tinamerlitti@gmail.com.**



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of the Akron Area

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**IMPORTANT DATES**

**March: Women's History Month**

**March 7: LWVAA Board Meeting 5:30 PM  
CUMC 380 Mineola Ave., Akron**

**March 10-16: Sunshine Week**

**March 14: Health Care Reform Forum, 7:00  
Unitarian Universalist Church  
3300 Morewood Rd., Akron**

**March 19: LWV Ohio Statehouse Day  
9:30 AM to 4:00 PM  
Riffe Center, Columbus, Ohio**



**Join the nation's most respected grassroots political organization —  
Become a member of the League of Women Voters!**

Membership in the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, is open to any citizen of voting age, male or female. Annual dues of \$60 include local, state and national membership, including newsletters from each. Dues are \$30 for those under 30 years of age. Household membership (same address) is \$30 for each additional member.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Make checks payable to LWVAA and send with this completed form to:  
LWVAA, 380 Mineola Ave., Akron, OH 44320  
or join online on our website: [www.lwvaa.org](http://www.lwvaa.org)**



**Vote for civility in  
civic discourse —**

**Join the League  
Today!**



League of Women Voters® of the Akron Area

# Health Care Reform:

## WHAT'S AHEAD?

Thursday, March 14

7:00 PM

Unitarian Universalist  
Church

*3300 Morewood Rd, Fairlawn*

*If you have more questions than answers, join us for this important discussion of many aspects of the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare)*



**Marie Curry, JD, MPH, Community Legal Aid**  
*Effects of Medicaid Expansion in Ohio*

**Ed Morrison, President Employee Benefits Division, Evans Insurance Agency**  
*Challenges Ahead for Small Businesses*

**Caroline Fracker, Compliance Officer, MedBen**  
*Compliance Requirements for Employee-Sponsored Health Benefits*

**Bill Keck, MD, MPH, Retired Director of Health, City of Akron**  
*Better Health Outcomes, Lower Costs*

*Q&A session will follow the panel*

*Co-Sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron Social Justice Coalition*

## Other meetings of interest....

The Leagues of Northeast Ohio and the Board of LWV Ohio  
invite you to attend LWVO  
**State Convention!**

**May 4-5, 2013  
Cleveland, Ohio**

**"Energizing Democracy: What Would Alice Do?"**



*State Convention is a wonderful time to come together in League, participate in dynamic workshops, share ideas and successes, plan for our League's future, catch up with old friends and make new ones.*

**Location:** Cleveland Downtown- Lakeside Doubletree Hotel  
1111 Lakeside  
Cleveland, OH 44114

Please contact Tina Merlitti if you are interested in attending: [tinamerlitti@gmail.com](mailto:tinamerlitti@gmail.com)

For a complete Convention agenda, please visit the LWVO website: [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org).



**LWV Tallmadge hosts:**

**"Water, Water, Everywhere"  
Thursday, March 21, 7:00 PM  
Tallmadge High School  
140 N. Monroe Rd., Tallmadge**

Edith Chase, longtime environmental activist from Kent, will provide an update of positions and goals of the Lake Erie Basin Committee, a consortium of Leagues from states that border Lake Erie.