

The Akron Voter

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President's Remarks

by Tina Merlitti

Every year I make a New Year's Resolution. It seems the "eat better and lose weight" always falls by the wayside, so this year, I am going for a different kind of makeover. I want to keep in mind how lucky I am and to be grateful. What does being grateful mean? For me, it is finding joy in what you have and letting the people around you know how they have made your life better. So often we take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude. This year I want to remember to not just react but to take a moment to appreciate the world around me.

So many people go home every night and sit on the couch, letting the world go by,

as they watch TV. They take for granted the freedom and wealth that we have in this great country. They do not appreciate the work and sacrifice that has made their world what it is and are not even willing to take the time to vote in elections, although many died to give them that privilege.

I think that just being a member of the League of Women Voters shows gratitude for the rich history of our country's democratic process, and our members recognize that we must continue to work to protect our rights as citizens. Our mission is to help wade through the political mine field and collect the facts to facilitate the educated participation in our great democratic process.

I am proud and grateful to be part of this great organization

and have had the privilege to work with many men and women who work to support the League of Women Voters. I would like to thank everyone who helped last year. I especially want to thank the LWVAA board for being there for me during my pregnancy and the birth of my daughter Elizabeth (Lizzy

11/18/13). Right now she sleeps, giving me a chance to write this message to you. My son and daughter have made me appreciate, even more, the work that we do as League members. They remind me why we keep going, to fight the good fight.

So this year, I challenge you to find why you are grateful for the community we live in and why you are grateful to be a part of the League of Women Voters. Be directly in-

involved in shaping the important issues to keep our community strong, safe and vibrant. Get involved in one project this year. Take a look at your handbook and look at the positions we advocate and ask yourself, "How can I help?" Help other smart, active leaders work to create change in our communities.

If you are not sure about taking a particular position, we are always looking for people to represent our organizations at various meetings as part of the observer corp. and of course there is always our voter registration and voter service activities.

Have a wonderful 2014! I look forward to hearing from each of you in the New Year.

Tina

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Action and Advocacy

by Tim O'Brien

Tim O'Brien writes a blog for the LWVUS website.

The League is taking a multi-pronged approach to combat the harmful effects of the Supreme Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act (VRA), the law that prevented widespread discrimination in voting for nearly 50 years. The Court's bad decision will allow more changes to election laws and practices at the state and local levels to occur with little or no scrutiny and

with little recourse until after an election when the harm to voters has been done. The League is working to set up a system to monitor and respond to these changes.

Additionally, the League is pushing for urgently needed reforms to our outdated election system in order to address low voter turnout and the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities and low income individuals at the polls.

The League is organizing our grassroots network, educating the public and working in coalition with other voting rights groups to develop and implement a plan to renew and restore the VRA in a bipartisan fashion in 2014.

We can expect continued battles against voting restrictions in Alaska, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina,

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This Month in Women's History

by Erica Greer

January 3, 1949 – Margaret Chase Smith (R-Maine) starts her tenure in the Senate, where she stays in office until 1973, became the first woman to serve in both the House and Senate as she previously served in the House (R-Maine, 1940-49)

January 5, 1925 – Nellie Tayloe Ross is inaugurated as the first woman Governor in U.S. history (Governor of Wyoming)

January 7, 1896 – Fanny Farmer's first cookbook, in which she standardized cooking measurements, is published

January 7, 1955 – Marian Anderson is the first African American woman to sing at the Metropolitan Opera

January 8, 1977 – Pauli Murray is ordained as the first female African American Episcopal priest

January 9, 1859 (1947) – Birthday of Carrie Chapman Catt, nationally recognized woman suffrage leader, led suffragists to victory in 1920 as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association

January 11, 1935 – Amelia Earhart makes the first solo flight from Hawaii to North America

January 12, 1932 [!] – Hattie Wyatt Caraway (D-Arkansas) is the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate, becomes the first woman to chair a Senate Committee and the first to serve as the Senate's presiding officer

January 25, 1980 – Mary Decker became the first woman to run a mile under 4 1/2 minutes, running it at 4:17.55

January 29, 1926 – Violette Neatly Anderson is the first black woman to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court



Hattie Wyatt Caraway

From The National Women's History Project website: www.nwhp.org

Did You Know — William Seward

by Maureen Sullivan

William Henry Seward was born in New York in 1801. He served as a New York senator from 1830 to 1834, New York governor from 1839 to 1842 and a U.S. senator from 1849 to 1861. He went on to serve as the nation's Secretary of State from 1861 to 1869 under Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson.

Seward went to Union College when he was 15 but went to Georgia for a while before graduating. His time spent teaching in the South reinforced Seward's abolitionist sentiments which began when he was young.

Seward studied the law and went to work with Judge Elijah Miller. Seward and Miller's daughter, Frances, were married and they moved into the Miller family mansion in Auburn, NY. They both were committed to the abolition of slavery and other types of social reform. The first Women's Rights Convention

was held in Seneca Falls, NY, a neighboring town to Auburn.

Seward was appointed Secretary of State by Abraham Lincoln. They became close friends professionally and personally, a friendship marked by respect and humor. An attempt was made on Seward's life by an ally of John Wilkes Booth the same night as Lincoln's assassination.

Once the Civil War began he was unwavering in his goal to preserve the Union. His foreign policy of isolating the Confederacy from foreign allies was and continues to be highly praised.

Under Andrew Johnson he acquired the territory of Alaska for the United States. This acquisition was ridiculed at the time and referred to as "Seward's Folly." The purchase amounted to about 586,000 square miles for \$7.2 million, or about 2 cents per acre!

William Seward was a supporter of Harriet Tubman and encouraged her to purchase the house she rented



William Seward

from him in Auburn. At that time it was unheard of for a woman to own property, let alone a woman who was an escaped slave. Today both Seward's and Tubman's homes are open to the public.

William Seward died in Auburn in 1872. He is said to be the first New Yorker with a monument in New York City. The Seward monument is located in Madison Square Park.

The deadline for the February *Akron Voter* is January 15. Please send any materials you may have to *Akron Voter* Editor Erica Greer at erica@greerzone.com, or via mail to 408 Ott Dr. New Franklin, OH 44216

Money in Judicial Elections

a Report from the Brennan Center

The following is taken from the November 2013 Ohio League Leaders Update.

Justice at Stake, the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, and the National Institute on Money in State Politics just came out with a new report entitled "The New Politics of Judicial Elections, 2011-12: How New Waves of Special Interest Spending Raised the Stakes for Fair Courts".

The report analyzes the prominent role of special interest money in state Supreme Court elections. In 2011-12, many of these races "seemed alarmingly indistinguishable from ordinary political campaigns- featuring everything from Super

PACs and mudslinging attack ads to millions of dollars of candidate fundraising and independent spending."

The report documents how the "boundaries that keep money and political pressure from interfering with the rule of law have become increasingly blurred."

The report found some disturbing trends in judicial elections across the country including:

- \$56.4 million was spent on high court elections in 2011-12. Interest groups and political parties pumped in nearly 50% of that total, compared to just 26% of the total in the last presidential election cycle. Super PACs funneled

money into state judicial elections for the first time.

More than 35% of the money spent on state high court races came from just 10 deep-pocketed special interest groups or political parties, up from 21% in 2007-08

If you would like to read the entire report, use the following link:

<http://newpoliticsreport.org/content/uploads/JAS-NewPolitics2012-Online.pdf>



Action and Advocacy

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Texas and Wisconsin. In addition to these threats we know we will see voter photo ID laws implemented in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi North Dakota and Virginia and there is no doubt that other states will be added to this mix in 2014 as the political landscapes change before and after the mid-term elections.

In the wake of the positive Supreme Court decision upholding the integrity of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), League advocates will continue to urge state leaders to fully comply with the federal requirements set forth in this landmark law. Commonly known as "Motor Voter," the NVRA streamlined the confusing array of state laws that hindered the voter registration process. The

law made it easier for Americans to register to vote by requiring states to provide voter registration opportunities when citizens obtain a driver's license or seek services at other government agencies, as well as through mail-in registration. Leagues are working to inform public assistance agencies of their obligation to provide voter registration opportunities to individuals; guiding agencies and elections officials so that their registration work is as effective as possible; and taking legal action when necessary.

While the League will be busy protecting the right to vote, we're also committed to reforming our elections in order to better serve voters. The League has identified five proactive elections administra-

tion reform priorities that the League will work to implement:

1. Permanent and Portable Statewide Voter Registration
2. Improved Polling Place Management
3. Expanded Early Voting
4. Secure Online Voter Registration
5. Electronic Streamlining of Election Practices

We are hopeful that we will see some positive reforms in 2014. Specifically, we think we might see advances in secure online voter registration in Florida, Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania; automatic voter registration in Oregon; electronic streamlining in Minnesota; and the expansion of early voting in New Jersey.

Notable Quotable

Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)



Lake Erie Basin Committee Report

by Carol Redmond

In July, 2013 the Lake Erie Basin Committee (LEBC) celebrated its 50th Anniversary.

The LEBC has a long-standing commitment to the restoration and preservation of Lake Erie and its watershed. LEBC is a multi-League group of state and local Leagues located within the Lake Erie Basin - a U.S. geographic area of approximately 20,900 square miles - that includes the Lake Erie watershed lands, rivers, and streams of five states: Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. Distinguished as the first Great Lakes watershed organization, the LWV Lake Erie Basin Committee is rooted in study and education and serves 32 Basin Leagues, including the League of Women Voters of Northern Portage County.

Committee members learned at the October 2013 meeting that Lake Erie is again threatened by excessive phosphorous enrichment. In the sixties and seventies the lake was threatened by algal blooms which resulted primarily from excessive nutrient enrichment from municipal sewage treatment plants. The United States and Canadian governments cooperatively addressed this problem by upgrading and expanding municipal sewage treatment plants and by reducing phosphorous content of household deter-

gents.

Sadly in 2011 Lake Erie experienced the largest algal bloom in the history of the lake. Although sewage treatment plants still contribute some phosphorous to the lake, the primary source of phosphorous in Lake Erie today is runoff from fertilized farm fields, lawns and impervious surfaces including streets and parking lots.

Lake Erie is the shallowest and warmest of the Great Lakes and is therefore more susceptible to nutrient overload and climate change. Because of climate change there are less frequent but more intense storms that lead to increased runoff from urban and rural lands. These factors have produced changes in the lake which affect drinking water supplies, fisheries, recreation and tourism, and property values.

The International Joint Commission (US and Can-

ada) has issued the Lake Erie Ecosystem Priority (LEEP) to address the effects of these changes. The purpose of LEEP is to provide advice to federal, state, provincial and local governments which will facilitate the restoration of the health of the lake's ecosystem. Complete results of the LEEP study along with the fifteen recommendations of the International Joint Commission may be found at http://www.ijc.org/en/news?news_id=124.

Carol Redmond is Co-Coordinator of LWV Lake Erie Basin Committee.



Women's Reproductive Health Rights

from LWV Ohio

Do you remember all the anti-women's health provisions that were added to the state budget bill earlier this year? Did you know that some women's health clinics across Ohio are already closing their doors because of that legislation?

Earlier this year, the state board of LWV Ohio identified women's reproductive health rights as a priority issue to

focus its education and advocacy work for the next two years. The LWVUS has had a strong position supporting women's access to reproductive health care for years. This issue has become increasingly partisan in recent years. As many League members have observed, the League's position has been consistent over time, and it is the political parties who have shifted.

Sadly, reproductive health rights are under attack in many states and the situation in Ohio is dire. While we recognize our partners in the Freedom of Choice Ohio coalition will be leading the charge, our hope is that adding LWVO's voice to this debate in Ohio will refocus discussion on the issues.

10 Ways the League Helped Make Democracy Work in 2013

LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara recently outlined 10 ways the League of Women Voters has helped make democracy work for The Huffington Post. Please read the entire article here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elisabeth-macnamara/10-ways-the-league-of-wom_b_4434665.html

"In 1920, suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters (LWVUS) to democratize the vote. Since then, League members across the country have worked tirelessly to strengthen our democracy and ensure equality for all.

Today, that work is needed more than ever. In the past year alone, League members have helped protect our democracy and ensure the equality of all Americans by thwarting widespread voter suppression efforts, educating and empowering voters, helping pass landmark state gun control legislation, leading the fight to protect our climate and more.

Carrie Chapman Catt understood the importance for all Americans to be en-

gaged in and empowered by our democracy. "Everybody counts in applying democracy," said Chapman Catt. "And there will never be a true democracy until every...adult in it, without regard to race, sex, color or creed, has his or her own inalienable and unpurchasable voice in government."

The League of Women Voters has been working to protect voting rights for over 90 years, and we take heed of our founder's words. From fighting the flood of secret money in our elections to protecting against attacks on voting rights - and so much more - here are just 10 of the countless ways that the League of Women Voters has helped to strengthen our democracy in 2013.

- 1) Successfully fought to preserve landmark voting registration legislation.**
- 2) Help[ed] lead the fight to repair and restore the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965.**
- 3) Fought voter suppression efforts**

across the states.

- 4) Helped lead the push for gun control legislation at the state and federal levels.**
- 5) Encouraged the administration to take the lead to protect our climate.**
- 6) Pushed for comprehensive immigration reform.**
- 7) Registered thousands of voters.**
- 8) Advocated for improvements to the nation's flawed voting system.**
- 9) Fought to protect our political system from big-money corruption.**
- 10) Educated voters and equipped them with everything they needed to vote.**

For details about these 10 ways the League helped make democracy work, please see the Huffington Post article at the link given above.

Holidays Party

by Jill Cabe

This year's annual holiday gathering was held at the home of Dr. Bill and Mrs. Ardith Keck on Saturday, December 7. League members enjoyed appetizers, drinks, and the opportunity to socialize and reconnect.

Our speaker, Kate Pilacky from the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, gave an interesting and informative presentation on land conservancy. Land conservancy involves maintaining large contiguous parcels of land, often former family farms, and protecting those lands

from being partitioned and developed by implementing a conservation easement. Families retain title and can build a family home for the next generation if desired, but the legacy of the farm remains and the neighbors can rest assured no big box retailer will move in.

League members interested in learning more about this important work can visit the Western Reserve Land Conservancy web site at:

<http://www.wrlandconservancy.org> .

Thank you to the Keck's for hosting and to League Secretary Martha Lester for arranging the speaker.



Kate Pilacky of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy

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

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Images from League down through the years...



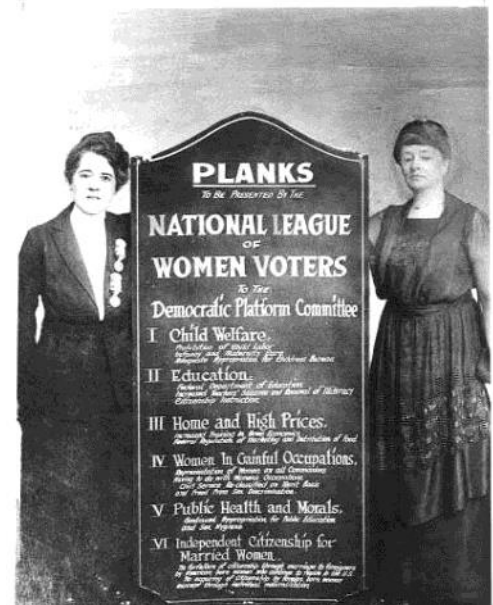
Protesters advocating women suffrage in front of the White House during World War I.



Alice Paul, who organized the protests in front of the White House



First National League Board, 1920



Planks suggested by the League for the Democratic National Convention, 1920

The League is not an end in itself. We are a training ground for democracy. That is what we have always been and that is what we will always be.

Elisabeth MacNamara
President, LWVUS



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IMPORTANT DATES

- January 1:** Happy New Year!
- January 9:** LWVAA Board Meeting, 5:30 PM
CUMC, 380 Mineola Ave., Akron
- January 18:** Program Planning 10 AM—Noon
Highland Square Library
807 West Market Street, Akron
- January 20:** Martin Luther King Day
- February 6:** LWVAA Board Meeting, 5:30 PM
CUMC, 380 Mineola Ave., Akron



**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.

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