



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

League of Women Voters of La Plata County

VOTER

Volume 9, Issue 5

Sixty-four Years Serving La Plata County
97 members

January, 2010

www.lwv.org

www.lwvlaplata.org

www.lwvcolorado.org

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Flyers:

Great Decisions
(Only 24 briefing books left if you haven't ordered yours! Contact Pat Chatfield, 247-1692)

LWVUS Positions in Brief
(review and bring to meeting)

Did you notice the new logo at the top of this page? This logo, representing the 90th year of the League of Women Voters of United States, will be used all year.

Mark your calendars!



January Meetings

National Program Planning

Thursday, January 7, 12:45 – 3 p.m.
Christ the King Lutheran Church
495 Florida Road

Come enjoy homemade soups and breads provided by your board while you refresh your knowledge of our national positions, consider options for new studies, and propose topics for 2010 advocacy by LWVUS Board.

Representative Government positions – Trish Pegram
Social Policy positions – Jill Patton
Natural Resources positions – Deanna Collins
International Relations positions – Ross Park
Collected ideas for new studies or updates and for 2010 advocacy – Marilyn Brown

* * *

LWVCO Legislative Conference

January 25, 8:30 – 1:15 p.m.
CO History Museum, 1300 Broadway, Denver

Topics:

Panel on education: speakers on charter schools, K-12 and Higher Ed
Fiscal policy issues: Senator Rollie Heath, chair, fiscal stability interim committee
Redistricting 2010, speaker TBD
Contact Stephanie Huss, 259-7263, if you're interested in attending.

*Thursday Great Decisions sessions start January 22
Tuesday Great Decisions sessions start January 27
Pick up your book now at the reference desk at Durango Public Library*

President's Message

"So, what's the League of Women Voters all about?" I was sitting in front of a roaring fire, having dinner with friends at their home in the Animas Valley. I was surprised at the question because this family had been in Durango all their lives.

What is the League all about? We are about to observe our 90th anniversary on February 14, 2010. This will be a year of celebration as we commemorate the passage of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. Our national website, www.lwv.org, describes our founding:

From the spirit of the suffrage movement and the shock of the First World War came a great idea - that a



nonpartisan civic organization could provide the education and experience the public needed to assure the success of democracy. The League of Women Voters was founded on that idea.

In her address to the National American Woman Suffrage Association's (NAWSA) 50th

convention in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1919, President Carrie Chapman Catt proposed the creation of a league of women voters to "finish the fight" and aid in the reconstruction of the nation. And so a League of Women Voters was formed within NAWSA, composed of the organizations in the states where woman suffrage had already been attained.

The next year, on February 14, 1920, six months before the 19th amendment to the Constitution was ratified, the League was formally organized in Chicago as the National League of Women Voters.

The La Plata League will start the celebration with cake and coffee at our Legislative Lowdown. This annual event, open to the public, will take place on Saturday, February 20th from 9:30-11:30 a.m. in The Peaks room at the Durango Recreation Center. Join our State Representative Ellen Roberts and State Senator Bruce Whitehead for a review of what is happening in the Legislature during this difficult budget year.

Our national program planning meeting has been set for Thursday, January 7th at 12:45 p.m. at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 495 Florida Road. See the next article. Homemade soups and breads will be served, so bring your appetite and join us.

2010 is a big year for our League and the 900 Leagues throughout the country. Let's celebrate our past and make plans for the future. Contact me if you have questions, suggestions or want to get involved.

-Stephanie Huss

National Program Planning (with Homemade Soups!)

Our meeting January 7 (12:45, Christ the King Fellowship Hall) actually has two purposes (besides taste-testing delicious soups and breads offered by your board): first, to review our national positions and decide whether any need updating and to generate ideas for new studies to be considered at national convention in June.

A second purpose is to identify items we want our national board to prioritize for legislative advocacy in 2010. The deadline for submitting advocacy priorities is January 15; the deadline for submitting program items for consideration at convention is March 1. We consider them both together now in the event that we wish to advance the probability of success at convention by joining with or influencing other LWVs across the country to support our desired program item prior to the deadline.

Items for 2010 legislative advocacy that have been suggested to date: Fair Elections Now Act (strongly advocated by Boulder County LWV) and immigration reform.

Items suggested so far as program items for convention:

- Study of federal role in education,
- Civics education (pretty much relegated to an action item),
- Cabinet Department of Peace,
- Update of arms control position (an LWVUS task force is working on this now),
- Election of Senators (to fill vacancies),
- Nuclear energy and waste.

Please review the *Positions in Brief* attached to your electronic version of this newsletter, *Impact on Issues* in hard copy if you have it and come with your ideas as to what we should study during the next biennium. If you do not have a copy of *Impact on Issues*, contact me and I will forward to you an electronic copy of the section of the book that relates to your idea.

-Marilyn Brown

Census 2010

[Ed. Note: We are grateful to Trish Pegram and Nadine Ancel for presenting clear and compelling information on the census process, reapportionment and redistricting to our members in November. These two articles are summaries of their remarks. The logo on the lower right will appear on one side of the 3000 fabric grocery bags we will receive thanks to the Denver Census 2010 office. The same in English will be on the other side. The funding application was submitted by Marilyn Brown with coaching of state board member Marge Fisch.]

The Census website www.2010census.gov has a wealth of information but I'll briefly mention a few items that may be of interest to local LWV members.

The US Constitution mandates a headcount every 10 years of everyone living in the United States, including all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the island areas. To be counted are people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens, non-citizens and the undocumented. A person is counted where they live and sleep most of the time. This includes those who live in more than one residence. Foreign students residing in the US are included but US citizens living outside the US are not counted except for the military and federal civilian government employees and their dependents.

The data that is obtained from the census bureau is used by our national leaders to make decisions regarding reapportionment and redistricting and the disbursement of \$400 billion in federal funds to tribal, state and local governments each year. The private sector, including business and individuals, also use this information in the aggregate.

The answers that you provide on the census form are strictly confidential and can not be shared with anyone, even government agencies, for the next 72 years. During the month of March, 2010, census forms will be placed on doorknobs of each household in La Plata County. The questionnaire will consist of 10 questions and should be completed by each household upon receipt and mailed back in the stamped return envelope. Respondents are required by law to answer all questions to the best of their ability. Households that do not respond may receive a replacement survey or a visit by a census taker. If you do not receive a form, or for additional information you can call the Telephone Questionnaire Assistance center at 1-866-872-6868 which will be open from February 25 through July, 2010.

-Nadine Ancel

The Census, Reapportionment and Redistricting

Our Constitution requires a decennial count, or census, of "persons" in the US for "taxes and representation". It does not say count only citizens, or only voters, and from the beginning all persons were included. The Congress directs the manner of taking the census, which is done by the Census Bureau. Census numbers are the basis for setting how many representatives each state gets in Congress (reapportioning) and for each state's use in setting its election districts (redistricting).

Reapportioning is done at the end of each census year by dividing the 435 House seats among the 50 states, using a mathematical formula set by Congress. Each state then uses its own method of dividing itself into districts. Redistricting of Congressional Districts in Colorado is done by the State Legislature, and is considered just like any other bill.

The US Supreme Court, in the 1960's, established the principle of "one person/one vote", meaning that in Congressional Districts a state must adhere as closely as possible to equal population in each district.

For State Legislatures, the Court declared that each house of the Legislature must be elected based on population and that election districts should have "substantial" equality of population. State legislative redistricting in Colorado is done by a Reapportionment Commission, appointed by the Legislature, the judiciary and the Governor. The one person/one vote principle carries down to local districts such as County Commissions. All these crucial redistricting decisions start with the decennial census, and can only be as correct as the census numbers allow.

-Trish Pegram



ESTÁ EN NUESTRAS MANOS

www.2010census.gov

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Two LWV Members Appointed to Judicial Performance Commission

Colorado is one of the few lucky states to use a merit-based system for selection of judges. Commissions on Judicial Performance, created in 1988 by the Colorado General Assembly to provide fair, responsible and constructive evaluations of trial and appellate judges and justices, are an integral part of that merit-based process. The commissions' evaluations enable voters to make informed decisions in judicial retention elections, and also provide judges with information that can be used to improve their professional skills. The Commissions write a narrative about each judge in their district who is standing for retention. The narrative is published in the Legislative Council's Blue Book, which is sent to Colorado's registered voters. It must include a recommendation of "retain," "do not retain," or "no opinion."

La Plata County is in the 6th Judicial District. Two members of LWV LPC are members of the 6th Judicial District Performance Commission. Lois Carpenter has been on the commission for 4 years and was recently reappointed to an additional four-year term by the Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey. Marilyn Sandstrom was recently appointed to a four-year term by Governor Bill Ritter.

For more information, click on the website www.coloradojudicialperformance.gov

-Marilyn Sandstrom

Our LWV's Contribution to LWVCO Sustainability Study

Members LWV LPC Environment, Energy and Sustainability Committee compiled a listing of over 100 sustainable programs, businesses, organizations and activities in La Plata County in response to the LWVCO Sustainability Study survey. LWV LPC was one of only two local Leagues that gathered the information and submitted it to the LWVCO by the end of November. To find out what's sustainable in La Plata County and read the report, sign on the LWV LPC website under Energy, Environment and Sustainability and click on La Plata County Sustainable Activities or go to <http://www.lwvlaplata.org/files/laplatacountysustainableactivities11-19-09.pdf>.

-Deanna Collins

LWVCO Opposes Three Ballot Issues

You'll be hearing more about these three ballot issues, which have now been cleared by the CO Secretary of State for the 2010 ballot. Because all three impact CO's budget in significant ways, the LWVCO board of directors voted in November to oppose all three and to join the coalition, Protect Colorado's Communities, to fight them, based on our state position supporting *'adequate and flexible funding of state government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive and which incorporates social, environmental and economic goals'*. The three ballot issues are as follows:

Amendment 60 (constitutional change) would immediately re-Bruce local governments (counties, cities, school districts, special districts, etc.) whose voters have previously voted to de-Bruce and sets a 4-year limit on any future de-Brucing action. It also significantly cuts property taxes for all governmental districts as cited. It applies a 10-year limit on future property tax increases, and eliminates the ability to extend expiring property taxes without an election.

Amendment 61 (constitutional change) would prohibit all levels of government in Colorado from issuing debt of any kind, including general obligation bonds, certificates of participation (COP's, the lease-back arrangements for buildings), revenue bonds, tax anticipation notes or borrowing by 'any other name'. It eliminates all forms of financing for government buildings, projects, etc.

Proposition 101 (statutory change) would reduce a wide range of state and local taxes and fees with the intent of cutting government services on all levels and most likely would repeal Referendum C passed by voters in 2005. It lowers the state income tax rate from 4.63% to 4.5% by 2011 followed by annual decreases of 0.1% until the state income tax rate reaches 3.5%. In 2011, all annual specific ownership taxes on vehicles shall decrease in four equal yearly steps to \$2 for new vehicles and \$1 for other vehicles. All registration, license, and title charges combined shall total \$10 yearly per vehicle. All telecommunication fees would be eliminated except the 911 fees at 2009 rates.

The Bell Policy Group is analyzing the bills and their expected impacts. The coalition's strategy is first to prevent them from getting on the ballot, then failing that, to fight them. Funds for legal expenses are needed.

-Marilyn Brown



Gail Harris Wows Leaguers

LWV member Gail Harris, retired Navy captain, presented a compelling, personal and humorous view of the intelligence community, of which she was an important part, at our holiday potluck December 5. Gail's new book, [A Woman's War: The Professional and Personal Journey of the Navy's First African American Female Intelligence Officer](#), was released on December 28th. This inspirational memoir follows her career as she provided intelligence support to military operations while battling the status quo, office bullies, and politics. Maria's Bookshop will host Gail in a book signing January 19 at 6:30 pm.

Gail emphasized that the intelligence community is a complex organization of sixteen Federal agencies, services, bureaus and other organizations in the executive branch although 85% of it is in the Department of Defense. The sole purpose of intelligence is decision support. Most of the public and many in government don't really understand how it works.

She enjoys giving talks about her career in order to encourage young people to consider the profession and to give them the flavor of what it is like. She talked a bit about the struggle to get her book published in the face of publishers who questioned its market since she is such a normal person!
-Marilyn Brown

Photo at right: Mary Ruth Bowman, in holiday dress, followed by new member Marilyn Holland, enjoys the colorful feast of edibles at the potluck, hosted by Deanna and Bill Collins, seen chatting with Sally Bellerue in the background.



Grace Deltcheff, Sally Bellerue, Dorothy Newell (from left)

Dorothy Newell Recognized for 50 Years of LWV Membership

Dorothy Newell, our fourth 50-year member, was feted at our December potluck. She initially joined LWV in Jefferson County and became a member of the Durango LWV in 1970. She served as president from March, 1975 to April, 1977, a time when the LWV was very active. During her tenure two successful fund-raising concerts were put on at Tamarron Resort. The 1976 CO ballot contained 10 state ballot issues, among them a bottle bill, which would have placed a refundable deposit on beer and soft drink containers; a proposal that would have repealed CO's approval of the Equal Rights Amendment; and a proposal that nuclear power plant projects would require a 2/3 vote of the General Assembly to construct. We were all surprised at how much was the same as now although Dorothy pointed out that since they didn't have email, letters to elected officials, of which she wrote MANY, took much more time on a typewriter.

Sally Bellerue presented a fond remembrance of Virginia Graham, a long-time member of our LWV, who died this fall. We will miss Virginia's loyal support.



<h2>Calendar</h2>			LWV La Plata County www.lwvlaplata.org 296 Highland Hill Drive Durango, CO 81301		
January Thu 7 Mon 11 Tue 19 19 and 21* Wed 20 Mon 25	National Program Planning, 12:45-3, Christ the King Church, 495 Florida Rd Census 2010 Committee Meeting, 1-3 Marilyn Brown's home Gail Harris's Book Signing, Maria's, 6:30 <i>Special Envoys</i> , Great Decisions Board meeting, 1-3 Deanna Collins' home Legislative Conference, 8:30-1:15, CO History Museum, Denver				
February 2 and 4* Sun 14 16 and 18* Sat 20 Sat 27	<i>Kenya and R2P</i> , Great Decisions LWVUS 90 th BIRTHDAY!!! <i>Global Crime</i> , Great Decisions Legislative Lowdown, 9:30-11:30 Peaks Room, Durango Rec Center AAUW Book/Author Luncheon, 12, Durango Library, <i>From Holes in My Soles to Rocks in My Socks</i>				
*All Great Decisions sessions are held in Program Room, Durango Library, brown bag lunch Tuesdays 11:45-1:45 Thursdays 12:30-2:30		<u>Board of Directors</u>			
<i>For more information on our committees, meetings, Colorado's fiscal crisis, the LWVLPC calendar and easy links to pertinent articles, check out our website at www.lwvlaplata.org. Contact Ross Park, webmaster, for a tutorial at eandrpark@aol.com.</i>		President Stephanie Huss, 259-7263 stephanie@frontier.net Secretary Grace Deltscheff, 259-3040 holgnd@frontier.net Health Care Jill Patton, 385-4061 jgpatton@frontier.net Env, Energy, Sustainability Deanna Collins, 259-7845 dcdurango@msn.com Great Decisions** Pat Chatfield, 247-1692 patchwork@gobrainstorm.net Ex Officio** Sally Bellerue, 385-0848 bellerue@frontier.net		Vice President Trish Pegram, 382-8248 trishpegam@bresnan.net Treasurer Nadine Ancel, 259-3675 ancelnm@yahoo.com Membership Marilyn Sandstrom, 764-4596 mjschili@bresnan.net Legislative Action** Ellen Park, 247-8116 gellenpark@aol.com Website** Ross Park, 247-8116 eandrpark@aol.com Newsletter Editor** Marilyn Brown, 259-3593 marilbrown@aol.com	
League Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.					
Join the League! Anyone of voting age may join the League of Women Voters. Others may be associate members. Discounted household memberships are available. Call Marilyn Sandstrom, 764-4596, for more information.		**Off-board			