

The Kansas Voter



October 2010

League of Women Voters of Kansas

Working together...for Kansas

“Keep Getting in the Way”

■ Highlights of 49th

National Convention

by *Ernestine Krehbiel*

I returned from the 49th national LWV Biennial Convention in Atlanta energized, exhausted, excited, and amazed—and a lot smarter! We have some very talented leaders in the League of Women Voters. The convention was well organized. The official job of the convention is to elect officers, adopt a budget, and set the program for the coming biennium. Kansas had 10 delegates in addition to national Board member, Janis McMillen. We were representing the 700 Kansas League members. (There are 65,000 Leaguers nationally.)

It was a delight to be greeted by the recently elected president of the Georgia League of Women Voters—a YOUNG African American MAN! It is great to see active young and diverse leaders in the League. The new national president of LWV, elected at the convention, is Elisabeth MacNamara Elisabeth MacNamara, also of Georgia.



Elisabeth MacNamara

The exciting, unannounced Keynote Speaker to open our 2010 Convention was Civil Rights hero and Congressman from Atlanta, John Lewis. He told us that League of Women Voters can set the model for

the world and complete that “more perfect union” promised in the Constitution. He told us the League is expert in knowing how to organize and urged us to continue to work for civil rights, to push for voters’ rights and the elimination of the Electoral College. He reminded us of the long fight against poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and literacy tests that kept many from voting and of the many times in his life when folks thought he and others fighting for civil rights were just getting in the way. He told us that the League knows how to do that better than most and his ringing call to us was for us, the League, to “Keep getting in the way.”

Other speakers included:

- Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Hon. Carol W. Hunstein, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Georgia on Diversity in the Courts;
- Leslie Sanchez, columnist, author, *You’ve Come a Long Way, Maybe*;
- A panel of all former LWVUS presidents giving highlights of their office years;
- Robert Cooney, historian and author of *Winning the Vote: The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement*;
- “Petticoats in Politics: Women Get the Vote” (fundraiser for Atlanta league) Kate Campbell Stevenson portrayed historical women, Susan B. Anthony, Eleanor Roosevelt and Marian Anderson to name a few.

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President’s Message

Fall League Day 2010 October 30

Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library,
1515 SW 10th Ave. 9:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.
Fee: \$20 includes continental breakfast
and lunch.

Agenda

9:30 Registration, continental breakfast
10:00 Opening Remarks
10:15 Hot Topics in the 2011 Kansas
Legislature
11:00 Break
11:15–12:15 Secretary of State Debate
12:15–1:00 Lunch
1:00–2:00 Building Membership - LWVUS
Staff

Registration due by Oct. 26. Send
checks to LWVK, P.O. Box 2366,
Topeka, KS 66603

On Fall League Day we are hosting one of the most important debates politically, an open-to-the-public Secretary of State Candidates’ Forum. This race is being watched by pundits around the nation. Republican candidate Kris Kobach is professor of law at UMKC and is an author of the new Arizona law about illegal immigrants. He has said there is voter fraud in Kansas that he needs to stop and that Kansas needs citizen photo identity cards. The Democratic opponent is Chris Biggs, serving now as Secretary of State finishing out Sec. Thornburgh’s term after he went into private business. Biggs has echoed previous Secretaries of State, Republican and Democrat, saying there is virtually no voter fraud and no need for citizen identity cards.

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2010 Convention, *continued*

The Convention adopted TWO studies for the biennium:

■ A study of the federal role in public education. The study will focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance



LWVK President Ernestine Krehbiel at Convention podium

relationships among all levels of the government. Scope will be dependent on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time.

■ A study on privatization of government functions: the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services, and assets to the private sector.

Budget

The proposed budget attempted to move to a biennial budget to match convention two-year calendar and planning. The plan was to raise the Per Member Payment (PMP) by a regular \$.20 per year so that local and state Leagues would have a regular budget figure to work with and not have to wonder what would be asked of local Leagues to pay their dues to national at the next convention. This was however, thrown into a "cocked hat" so to speak, as the convention adopted TWO studies (for the first time in most members' memory) and there was money in the proposed budget for just one two-year study. So the delegates with a motion from the floor voted to raise the PMP for this first year of 2010-2011 to \$29.70 (instead of \$29.60) and a PMP of \$30.00 for 2011-2012 as originally proposed. See the 2010-2011 budget adopted at Convention. Our very own LWVK delegate, Linda N. Johnson of Winchester, went around with some League-logo bags and collected

contributions from the delegates to help provide funds for the still under-funded second study. She managed to raise \$3,000 of the \$10,000 needed for the first year of that second study.

Positions adopted by concurrence at Convention:

- An updated Arms Control Position.
- An addition to the LWVUS position on selection of the president: "We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished."
- An addition to the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position: "The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. The LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved."

Resolutions passed:

- To support lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba.
- To call upon the Board to use the resources of the League to support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources. This strengthening should include elimination from national legislation of the exemptions for drilling and mining, as well as additional legislation requiring the federal agencies to regulate drilling and mining in a manner consistent with the preservation of a healthy environment. We also call on the

Board to communicate with the President and the Congress putting them on notice that Leagues across the country are deeply concerned about this issue.

- To call upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster.

- To add the principle of TRANSPARENCY to the SARA Resolution, as adopted by the



Kansas delegates at LWV national convention in June

LWVUS Convention Of 2005. Revised to include the following Principles: Security; Accuracy; Recountability; Accessibility; and Transparency.

- To call upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all.

- To call upon the LWVUS to highlight the need for those responsible for the oil spill to be held accountable. Further, the LWVUS demands that our government hold those responsible for the environmental disaster accountable for the clean-up. The LWVUS further urges the legislative and executive branches of the federal government to immediately take all necessary steps to maximize to the extent practicable the ability and efforts of all relevant federal agencies and departments to take action, and to work with the U.S. coastal states and communities most directly and immediately affected, to respond creatively, efficiently and effectively to the environmental, health and economic crisis created by the oil flowing from the out-of-control BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico and by the efforts to contain and disperse it.

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2010 Convention, *continued* Bylaw Changes

●Article III, Sec. 2 A (3), Membership, was amended by striking out the word "honorary" before the words "life members." The bylaw will then read "those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more shall be life members excused from the payment of dues. (Note: All Leagues must conform their bylaws to this change.)

●Article IX, Sec. 4, Convention Powers, Article X, Sec. 4, Council, Powers, Article XIII, Sec. 3 and 4, Financial Administration were amended to provide that a biennial budget would be adopted at Convention, starting in 2012.

●Article X, Sec. 1. Place, Date and Call of Council was amended to provide that council shall be held at a time and place or in a manner determined by the national board. 3

Convention Impressions

by Elinor Tourtellot, Lawrence

The overall organization and structure of the convention was impressive. Every event ran on time. Over 700 women and men participated in the democratic process, debated and voted in a civilized manner.

I remember former league member Ruth Shur's quote regarding membership recruitment initiative as told by her husband Walter Shur: "There are three kinds of people, those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who don't know what's happening."

I learned a great deal from the caucuses, particularly the "National Popular Vote Compact" and "Medicare for All".

The LWVUS has long opposed the Electoral College and supported direct election of the President. Changing our Electoral College system of presidential elections to the popular vote would be a direct and fair way for each American's vote to count. Under the U.S. Constitution,

the states have exclusive and plenary (complete) power to allocate their electoral votes, and may change their state laws concerning the awarding of their electoral votes at any time.

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact is an agreement among U.S. states that would effectively replace the Electoral College. States joining the compact would agree to award their electoral votes to the candidate with the most popular votes nationwide with the objective of involving enough states to represent a controlling majority of the Electoral College (currently 270 votes). With the national popular vote winner sure to have a decisive majority in the Electoral College, he or she would automatically win the presidency.

At least 70% of Americans support a system of electing the president using the national popular vote. As of January 2010, five states have enacted the Interstate Compact—almost 23% of the 270 electoral votes needed for the compact to take effect - and many more were passed by state legislatures but lacked gubernatorial approval.

In the caucus on Medicare, Dr. Henry Stone of Bloomington, Indiana, presented a clear case for a single payer-system similar to Canada's. It is a fact that 45,000 people die per year for lack of health insurance in the U.S. Illness and medical bills cause 62% of bankruptcies. We have the most expensive health care in the world. Maternal mortality in U.S. is 37th in the world according to the World Health Organization global ranking. Myths are that we have the best medical care in the world, and that single-payer would result in socialized medicine. Dr. Stone said the facts are not controversial. The argument against single-payer is political.

Dr. Stone says the health insurance companies wrote the PPACA bill and that it will make our health system more vulnerable. Anger over mandate to have

insurance, loss of Medicare advantage subsidies, new regulations exposing people to risk and run away cost will make Medicare inevitable. He supports Bill HR676, which calls for a non-profit healthcare system. He suggests bringing people into the system incrementally, starting with women over 55 years of age and babies; the larger the risk pool the larger the efficiency.

What can we do to have improved Medicare for all? Educate ourselves, learn facts, and find our voices. 3

Convention Report

by Denae Lyons, Wichita Metro

Workshops are "how to" from the National League. Caucuses are advocacy from local or state leagues who are trying to get the whole convention to vote for the LWVUS to adopt something that they support.

Work Shops / Caucuses Notes:

●Caucus on Criminal Justice: Sentencing Reform—There are too many mentally ill people being jailed instead of placed in hospitals. Sponsors of the caucus ask support for a two-year study to report at the 2012 convention.

●Caucus on Sustainable Water and Food Supplies: Glenview, IL League raised the question, "Why is there nothing about healthy food in the LWVUS program?"

They proposed the creation of a new public policy position statement: "The League of Women Voters believe that policies relating to natural resources, including air and water quality, environmental protection, pollution control and sustainable food and clean water supplies."

Only 80% of food approval comes through FDA except meat and poultry. Flooding caused by development and lack of maintaining infrastructure (old sewers, etc) is causing water to run into streets in some cities. We also need clear definition and certification of organic food.

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Report, *continued*

● **Caucus on Election Integrity: Seeking Transparency:** The objective of league is to add Transparency (T) to Secure, Accurate, Recountable and Accessible to SARA resolution, so it will be SARAT.

There are many security problems with voting machines. Touch screens are susceptible to hackers. Some states have no audit trails. One of the problems with electronic voting is you do not see that there is a problem. One company produces 70% of the machines used in the U.S. All electronic machines need scan tabulation capability.

Quotes:

Joseph Stalin — “Those who cast the votes decide nothing; those that count the votes decide everything.”

Ronald Reagan — “Trust, but verify.”

Barack Obama — “Transparency means accountability.”

● **Caucus on National Popular Vote Concurrence.** Dr. Bob Holmes, former Georgia representative, and Chris Pearson, former Vermont representative, were present to answer questions. (*See description of this caucus in Elinor Tourtellot's article.*)

● **Caucus on Working for Sustainability: Citizens' Toolkit for Energy/Climate Change—**The changing climate is threatening human health and causing environment damages. Sustainable means living in a way to sustain the environment and renew resources. If we do nothing, within a few decades, the CO2 will be at the levels same as before ice was on the planet.

There is kid oriented information - objective is to empower children, e.g., Earthman has videos and music. See toolkit on LWWVUS website.

■ **Workshop Voter Registration Drives or Role of Election Observers (A Global and U.S. Perspective)**

Panel discussion

■ **Garcia M Hillman - Member of US Election Assistance Commission Help America Vote Act passed by Bush. At**

federal level there is money given to states for elections. There is a statewide voter database. They look at how ballots are designed, help with those with disabilities. They have found that it appears that observers endorse specific candidates. That is why it is good that the League of Women Voters is involved. She briefly talked about international observer and how people from other countries are sent to the US to observe our elections. Initially, there was push back on international observers, however administrators are starting to be more receptive. The fact is observers need more training.

■ **Elaine Apter - 30 year league member from Maryland.** Her league has been called on to observe the observers; they get training and a checklist to observe the observers even the building and grounds. Also, they get a bag of supplies in case observers forget something. All precincts are covered. They have a report out with the observations after the election—a lessons-learned session. Her league even helps the board of elections with filling the supplies bags. Board of elections receives the reports. The object of observing the observer is for education not punitive.

■ **Diane Hibino, League Co-President from Montgomery, Maryland.** Her league makes about 10K on elections. She mostly talked about how Bolivia encourages their citizens to vote. In Bolivia, elections are held on Sundays and no cars are allowed on streets, except emergency and election officials. All people have to walk to voting places, and to prevent fraud, all voters are required to dip a finger in purple ink. We need to follow more international elections, the good and bad, not just the results, but how they prepare and post election results.

■ **Dr Jennifer McCoy PhD,** talked about international observers. Some countries want legitimacy. Objective is to detect and deter fraud. There are difficulties in bringing international observers to other countries. The U.S. never goes unless there is an

invitation. In 1992 we brought observers in from Mexico because they wanted to see our voting process. They saw a lot of holes in our process. In their minds, our system is setup on trust.

Suggestion from audience: Do not call observing a fundraising activity, call it contract work.

■ **Workshop: Is the Quest for a More Diverse Judiciary Important? Is it attainable? Featured Chief Justice Carol W. Hunstein of Georgia.**

In 2001 62% of whites believe we have a fair judicial system while 85% of blacks do not. Women attorneys were not taken seriously. Judges do not represent the people they represent the law. Gov. Miller believed in appointing the best and brightest but he also believed in diversity, so Georgia now has a more diverse judicial cabinet.

■ **Knowledge Transfer Luncheon: Is the Quest for a More Diverse Judiciary Important?**

Had lunch with Zaida, David, Kansas Delegates and leagues from South Carolina. A Quest for a More Diverse Judiciary has selected a new state, South Carolina, to increase diversity. National wanted us to share our experiences about working on the campaign. 3

90 Years of Suffrage



Many Leagues held events to honor the 90th anniversary of women's suffrage. Pictured is the Arise Choir in Wichita with co-presidents Denae Lyons and Sally Dewey and member Sharon Cranford. About 350 people attended the program with speakers and suffrage marchers.

Food & Water

by Linda N. Johnson, State Board

The caucus led by Glenview, IL on food and water policy proposed the creation of a new public policy position statement: That positions already adopted under natural resources including air and water quality, environmental protection, pollution control and sustainable agriculture allow the recommendation for governmental action in order to assure access to adequate, sustainable, safe and clean food and water worldwide. A retired employee of the FDA was in the audience and provided good, affirming information. A young member spoke eloquently on the "precautionary principle" in support of this change.

The presenters provided a list of DVDs and books, as well as a number of web sites with relevant information and educational materials. They suggested using some of these materials in conjunction with programs at the local public library.

They were very persuasive about the need for closer scrutiny and coordinated regulation of our food and water supplies, for a revised position that would allow LWVUS to lobby on this issue, and for continued education of ourselves and the public about this issue.

If anyone wants more information on available resources for a local program, please contact Linda N. Johnson at swlkj1@gmail.com.3

Redistricting

by Linda N. Johnson, State Board

LWVUS issued a Statement of Essential Principles on redistricting that were supported by a diverse set of community leaders and activists. The principles are:

1. An accurate and complete count in the Census is an essential building block for all redistricting efforts;
2. The process used for redistricting must be transparent to the public;
3. The redistricting process, at all

levels of government, must provide data, tools and opportunities for the public to have direct input into the specific plans under consideration by the redistricting body; and

4. In order to achieve representative democracy, redistricting plans must be drawn in a manner that allows elected bodies to reflect the diversity of the populace, especially racial and ethnic diversity.

The process begins with the numbers. Each congressional district has to have almost exactly the same number of residents. State or local districts may have more variation—up to 10% in some states.

Next, look for compliance with the Voting Rights Act. If populations of racial or language minorities are relatively close together, be careful not to "crack" them into several districts, nor "pack" them into one district in order to dilute their power elsewhere. Any new plan has to leave minority populations at least as well represented as they were before redistricting.

Then, look to state law, and community, physical, or other natural boundaries or communities. To actually draw the district, there is commercial software that can help draw appropriate boundaries.

Finally, be sure to get public feedback, both before draft maps are offered, and after districts are proposed. 3

President's Message *continued*

In the afternoon we will have a representative of the national League bringing some of the latest research based techniques on growing our membership

2011 will be an interesting and busy year for legislature and therefore for the lwvk

From our very founding the League of Women Voters has been an organization of people who study for ourselves the issues of the day before we arrive at a position. After weighing facts and arguments on all sides of proposed public policy and

discussing it with ourselves and others, we arrive at our position by consensus of the members. But we don't stop with our decision about what is the right public policy. We then act on that position and work to educate and inform both the electorate and the public officials.

This coming biennium of 2010-2012, we will have our hands full studying two national studies. Coming first will be the study on what should be the role of the federal government in education. That committee has recently been chosen to help determine the scope and parameters of the study and we should get information from them early in 2011 on that. The study of privatization of government services will start a little later. Janis McMillen (Johnson Co LWV and LWV US Director) will chair this study. As you can see, both of these are so huge that the committees will have to narrow them to help us get our mouths around them.

Hot Topics

We will start our Fall League Day focused on Hot Topics Coming. Here in Kansas we are facing some significant issues that will come up in our own legislature in January 2011. Here are just a few on which we will need League worker bees to help fight in a League way.

●Protecting our merit selection of the judiciary. All Court of Appeals judges and all Supreme Court Justices and about half of the district courts in Kansas are by merit selection of district judges. The rest of the District judges are chosen by partisan election. There looks to be a fight coming where some will use specious arguments to try to re-politicize the appellate courts by arguing that the Senate should approve all governor's choices. At the federal level, the judges are chosen for life. At the Kansas level, the governor's appointees must stand for retention elections every few years so it is not out of the people's hands.

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President's Message *continued*

- Campaign finance fairness and transparency—for all 527 groups as well as candidates, including retention of judges under that
- Abolishing the Death Penalty—it was a tie vote in the Senate last year so we sure hope we can get that one more vote.
- Adequately funding education, services to the elderly, disabled and mentally ill or handicapped.
- Monitor cuts vs. taxes and push for tax fairer than regressive sales tax.
- Getting the legislators to look at the list of tax exempt entities—chaos that has left an inequitable hodgepodge AND deprived Kansas of \$5 billion over 10 years.
- Reapportionment based on population not political party strength.
- Fight the imposition of required voter photo ID as burdensome to poor and elderly.
- Be alert about water issues along with environmental pollution topics: the Holcomb coal-fired plant and fractured rock methods of gas extraction.
- Encourage legislature to incentivize renewable energy solutions for jobs and environmental quality. 3

LWVK Shares Judicial Project Experience with S. Carolina League

by *Ernestine Krehbiel*

This year of LWV Judiciary Project has gotten Kansas Leagues quite a few kudos from around the state and even around the country. Thanks to Zaida Arguedas and David at the national office, the Kansas Courts web page is more transparent and voter friendly. It now shows all Kansas judicial nominating commissions and rosters of nominating commissioner members for each judicial district. This increases transparency in the judicial nominating process for Kansas Courts. You can see the Kansas courts new page here, <http://www.kscourts.org/Appellate-Clerk/Nominating-Commission/default.asp#Jdnc>

We were asked to share our experiences with the Judicial Project with the South Carolina League which has been chosen to get the judicial grants for the coming year. It was fun to toot our own horn but quite honestly, after hearing about their problems with the SC judiciary, our Kansas issues seem small.

Their judges are chosen by the legislature and thus the judges are almost always just “good old boys” who are retiring legislators who want cushy jobs. There is such a connection between their courts and the legislature that there is little independence of the branches. Talking with the South Carolina League members certainly puts our problems in Kansas in perspective. 3

Dates for the Your Calendars:

- October 30 – Fall League Day
- October 30, 2010 – LWVK Board meeting 2:00-4:00 after Fall League Day
- June 17-20, 2011 – LWVUS Council, Washington, D.C.
- June 8-12, 2012 – LWVUS Convention, Washington, D.C.

Note: LWVK now has a post office box. Please use it for correspondence.

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