



**LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®**

Cuyahoga **VOTER**

The Newsletter of The League of Women Voters Cuyahoga Area

Winter 2012

**LWV Cuyahoga Area
50 Public Square, #938
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-781-0555**

www.lwvCuyahogaArea.org

CO-PRESIDENTS:

**Carol Gibson
Susan Gray**

VICE PRESIDENTS:

**Adele Cohn,
Program**

**Mary Warren,
Membership**

**Rosemary Sutton,
Voter Service**

**Janice Patterson,
Fund Development**

**Janet Kershaw,
Outreach**

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Bernice McGovern

CHAPTER CONTACTS:

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**Nikki Salupo,
Fairview Park Chapter**

**Maryann Barnes,
Heights Chapter**

**Roz Peters, Hillcrest
Chapter**

**Kathy Kosiorek and
Madeline Carr,
Lakewood Chapter**

**Jean Rounds and Sally
Ebling, Rocky River Chapter**

**Carole Koscielny, Westlake/
North Olmsted Chapter**

The League ... Good Government Advocate

Some people are surprised to learn, even shocked, that the League does advocacy. We are nonpartisan in that we never endorse candidates, but, as long as we have a League position to back us up, it's an important part of our mission to publicly critique government policies and practices. (Most prominently within the past few years: county government reform.)

We are, however, much better known for registering voters and fighting for voters' rights than the many public issues for which we have adopted positions after study and consensus building.

Because of the extensive positions League holds at the national, state and local levels, we have an astonishing platform of knowledge from which to speak out. The discipline of League organization and study has served us well by creating in the public mind an image of integrity. We have a great brand!

The frustrating part of this story is that we don't do nearly enough speaking out because we simply don't have the people-power to do it. (The same can be said about voter registration, but my focus here is advocacy.)

Why don't you become an Armchair Advocate? Choose the topic you feel most strongly about. Check League websites to look through all our positions (aka "Program"), point out stories and events to League leaders, and write letters to go out under the League logo and above the League president's name.

For example: Learn more about LWVUS's clean air campaign at www.LWV.org, LWVO's redistricting activities at www.LWVOhio.org, or our local Hot Topic meetings at www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org.

For something more active, become a county council observer, or serve on one of our off-board committees. Contact me for more information or to volunteer at lwvcuyareapresid@gibson@gmail.com.

— Let's speak out in 2012! Happy New Year.

— *Carol Gibson, Co-President*

Inaugural Year Completed

Cheers! Our first-ever County Council and new County Charter government has just completed its inaugural year, and we have been in the front row the whole way. I hope you have felt a part of it, whether or not you managed to attend one of the "fresh start" sessions at County Council chambers in the Justice Center at 1200 Ontario Street. Make a New Year's Resolution to do so if you have not, or at least go to the Council website and watch an archived video of a meeting or tune in for live session.

The Cuyahoga County Council convened in 2012 at an earlier start time, 5 p.m., on January 10. Complimentary parking in the Huntington Garage is available from 4 p.m. on. New observers would be a welcome addition to the eight already on board as the LWV-Cuyahoga Area County Council Observers Corps. On-the-job training will be provided.

Any League member can make a request to join the e-mail list of post-Council observers' notes by contacting Lynda. Our "watchdoggers" span the county from Westlake to Chagrin Falls and include board members from our sister Leagues as well.

— *Lynda Mayer, County Government Chair*

Hot Topic Meeting – Privatization

The League of Women Voters Cuyahoga Area will be participating in the LWVUS study on privatization with a consensus meeting on Wednesday, March 28, 2012, at Massimo de Milano restaurant, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. A buffet lunch will be available for \$11.

Mr. Zach Schiller from Policy Matters Ohio will speak, followed by discussion and consensus. According to the LWVUS web site, the scope of the study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good. For study materials, go to www.lwv.org/content/leaders-guide-privatization-study-consensus.

Suggestions for Letters to the Editor

Keep it short! Keep it on the subject! Be timely! Letters will not be considered if the subject has either been totally covered by other letter writers or if too much time has passed since the item on which you are commenting was published. If possible, reference the specific article on which you are commenting and its source, giving title and date. It always helps to have a “hook” or unusual way to present your opinion to catch readers’ attention. The opening sentence should be one to attract attention.

(More to follow next issue.)

— *Belinda St. Leger*

Support LWV Ohio: Your Voice on Critical State Issues

We invite members to support the work of the state League, your voice at the Statehouse!

All League members will receive a fundraising appeal letter in February asking for support. LWV Ohio/Education Fund Development Chair **Janet Kershaw** (LWV Cuyahoga Area) encourages all League members to participate, noting, “This year will be one of great potential and challenge as we strive to make a difference on redistricting and pro-voter reforms – issues at the core of making democracy work.”

This past year, LWV Ohio/Education Fund made great strides in advocating, educating and making the case for reform – with achievements in the core League areas of redistricting and election administration and voter protection. With your support, LWV Ohio and our Education Fund have the opportunity to seize the momentum that is growing around these core good government issues and push for significant reform.

You can donate online at www.lwvohio.org or send a contribution to: League of Women Voters of Ohio, 17 South High Street, Suite 650, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

Please join League members from across Ohio in investing in the work of your state League

High School Mock Elections 2011 Project Successfully Completed

High School Mock Elections in four area high schools reach 1200 eleventh and twelfth grade students.

Thank you to our many League volunteers for supporting the three days of “Engaging A New Generation of Voters” activities for the popular education fund project’s fourth year.

Brecksville High:

Moderator: Susan Jankite

Issue Forum Pro & Con Presenters: Linda Lalley & Pam Smith

Activity Volunteers:

*Bernice McGovern, *Claudette Kuisel, Kate Howley,
Becky Thomas, Roz Peters, Nancy Lilley, Lynda Mayer

* = volunteered 2 activities

Fairview High

Moderator: Nikki Salupo

Issue Forum Pro & Con Presenters: Linda Lalley & Pam Smith

Activity Volunteers:

Nancy Calcott, Mary Case, Mary Worthington, Claudette Kuisel,
Barbara Ebright, Anne Engel, Bernice McGovern, Conda Boyd

Parma Senior High:

Moderator: Carol Gibson

Issue Forum Pro & Con Presenters: Linda Lalley & Janice Patterson

Activity Volunteers:

Kathy Kosiorek, Rosemary Sutton, Conda Boyd, Claudette Kuisel, Kathy
Woodbridge, Becky Thomas, Barbara Ebright, Nancy Lilly, Charlene More

Brush High:

Moderator: Susan Jankite

Issue Forum Pro & Con Presenters: Linda Lalley & Janice Patterson

Activity Volunteers:

Lillian Houser, Renee Epstein, Claudette Kuisel, Barbara Williams,
Linda Tobin, Doris Vargo, Carolyn Sugiuchi, Fern Jennings, Roz Peters

Staff Project Coordinator: Julia Arnold-Hess

Education Fund Executive Director: Mary Lou Jones



The greatest price of refusing to participate in politics is being governed by your inferiors.

— *Plato, The Republic*

VOTER Co-Editors

Wendy Deuring
Anne Engel

Ethics Panel at City Club

County Executive Ed FitzGerald, PD reporter Harlan Spector, and LWV County Government Chair **Lynda Mayer** discussed improvements in the county's ethical culture at a January 11 lunch program at the City Club, sponsored by the Cleveland Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. Among the attendees were Chairman Dave Greenspan of the Council's Rules Committee, the county's new Inspector General Nailah Byrd, and nearly a dozen League members.

Mr. FitzGerald elaborated upon what he called the "sea change" in transparency, merit hiring, new efficiency and ethical awareness taking place in the new county workplace. He credited the "strikingly better" public opinion of county government found by a new poll as solid evidence of this positive change. FitzGerald claimed that changes instituted over the past year have replaced the old club atmosphere and anti-intellectualism that dominated many former county offices. When do you recall Russo or Dimora having a rigorous debate about public policy, he asked.

Lynda, who spoke in her capacity as chair of the former Transition's Ethics Workgroup, joined in the general accolades while also adding a note of caution. She took a "wait and see" approach to the unprecedented and so far untested enforcement mechanisms adopted by the new government. Instead of an independent ethics board, as nearly all similar counties have and her workgroup recommended, the council has vested enforcement in a Human Resource Commission and a newly devised Inspector General Agency.

Mr. Spector praised the county's new ethics ordinance, calling it the toughest in Ohio. Lynda got a laugh when she pointed out that it is the toughest because it's the only one. She added her voice to Mr. Spector's call for an inspector general more independent of the vicissitudes of partisan politics. That would entail writing the IG agency and office into the county charter, along with some guarantee of funding apart from council's normal budgetary process.

Both Mr. FitzGerald and Mr. Greenspan declared their agreement in principle with Lynda's suggestions for making the IG's office independent of politics. It is clear, from the tenor of this kind of dialogue, that the county's current leaders are, piece-by-piece, trying to erect enough roadblocks to defer and deter the possible day when future officials and their associates might once again be tempted to stray.

— *Carol Gibson*

Report on Education Consensus Meeting

On November 16 eighteen Cuyahoga Area League members spent the day reaching consensus (and sometimes not) on "The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education." Throughout five hours of serious and thought-provoking discussion, we agreed and sometimes agreed to disagree about how much influence the federal government should have over our nation's public schools.

A number of the consensus questions dealt with Common Core Standards, which our group felt should be suggested rather than mandated. We were especially wary of common standards that could be developed that would promote the teaching of unscientific concepts like creationism. We agreed that if national standards were mandated they should first be thoroughly tested and evaluated, and they should be funded.

We rejected the idea of student test data being used by the federal government to evaluate individual teacher effectiveness. However, student test data should be informative as to how well individual students have mastered nationally established criteria, and how individual school districts compare to others that are similar.

Finally, we agreed that early childhood education (birth to age five) is important and should ideally be available to all children, but given limited resources, federal funding should be used first for special needs children, with special needs including economic need and giftedness as well as need related to disability.

We submitted our results to the National LWV where it will be analyzed along with results from other Leagues that opted to participate in the study. That compilation will be used in the creation of National League policy which will then inform League lobbying efforts.

Our committee was chaired by **Nancy Dietrich** and ably staffed by presenters **Jean Rounds** and **Maryann Barnes**; facilitators **Mary Warren**, **Carol Gibson**, and **Susan Gray**; Education Committee Chair **Adele Cohn**; and hospitality guru **Lois Gross**.

— *Nancy Dietrich, Education Chair*

Book Club dates:

Contact **Lesley Hahn** with any questions

March 11 – *The Fear* by Peter Godwin – **Wendy Deuring**, discussion leader, at the home of **Carol Gibson**

May 20 – *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson – Lesley Hahn, discussion leader, at the home of **Roslyn Talerico**

July 15 – *Back to Our Future* by David Sirota – **Judith Weiss**, discussion leader, at the home of **Mary Warren**



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**Cuyahoga Area VOTER
Winter 2012**

**DELIVER PROMPTLY
DATED MATERIAL**

Save the Dates

Northeast Ohio Regional Meeting

February 25, 2012
Parma Heights Library, 6206 Pearl Road
Redistricting Reform and the Accountability Project

36th Cleveland International Film Festival

March 22 - April 1, 2012
LWV Cuyahoga Area is a sponsor
Information at www.clevelandfilm.org

LWVUS Privatization Meeting

March 28, 2012, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Massimo de Milano
1400 West 25th St.

Statehouse Day

April 10, 2012
Columbus, Ohio

Ethics in Government Positions

April 21, 2012 10:15 a.m. to noon
Martin Luther King Branch of the Cleveland Library
1962 Stokes Blvd. (in University Circle)

Annual Meeting

May 19, 2012 – Meeting 9:00 a.m. to noon
Lunch and speaker follow (Edward FitzGerald, County
Executive, is scheduled to speak)
West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church
20401 Hilliard Blvd., Rocky River, 44116

2012 Voting Calendar

| | |
|------------------|--|
| January 31, 2012 | Vote by mail/absentee ballots available upon application |
| February 6, 2012 | Registration closes |
| March 3, 2012 | Voting in person at Board of Elections ends at 6 p.m. |
| March 3, 2012 | 12 noon deadline for receipt of absentee ballot applications at Board of Elections |
| March 5, 2012 | Postmark deadline for absentee ballots mailed in US |
| March 6, 2012 | Primary Election: 6:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. |
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| October 2, 2012 | Vote by mail/absentee ballots available upon application |
| October 9, 2012 | Registration closes |
| November 2, 2012 | Voting in person at Board of Elections ends at 6 p.m. |
| November 3, 2012 | 12 noon deadline for receipt of absentee ballot applications at Board of Elections |
| November 5, 2012 | Postmark deadline for absentee ballots mailed in US |
| November 6, 2012 | General Election |