



CUYAHOGA AREA VOTER

Fall 2009 • The Newsletter of The League of Women Voters Cuyahoga Area • www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org

Support League-Sponsored Charter for Cuyahoga County

League members in Cuyahoga County are spending much of the summer and fall working to help voters understand, and pass, a long-awaited County charter plan. League involvement goes back even further, as our experts analyzed and corrected early drafts of the proposal last winter. Over 50 members are stepping into the thick of the campaign, collecting over 2,000 petition signatures by the July 10 deadline, posting or publishing informative materials, making group presentations, and strategizing with charter proponents.

All members can help with this campaign. First, inform yourself by reading through the information on our website: www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org. Perhaps you know of a group that would like to hear the League's presentation about the competing ballot issues. Would you consider supporting the campaign financially, whether on the www.NewCuyahoga.com website or ours? Perhaps you would like to respond to news and opinion articles in the daily papers. Call County Government

Committee chair, Lynda Mayer, at 216-371-5532, to find out what still needs to be done. At the very least, please help to convince your County friends and relations to **follow the facts, not the misinformation**, and turn out on November 3 (or vote early!) **FOR** the League-sponsored "Charter for Cuyahoga County."



L-R: Lynda Mayer, Member of the Board of Directors of the LWV Cuyahoga Area and Marcia Goldberg, President of the LWV Shaker Heights

You may be wondering about the competing ballot issue which proposes that a new Charter Commission study is a better idea. It is not. **This County does not need yet another study.** Its proponents and most of those running for its 15 "nonpartisan" seats are already on record as opposed to almost every reform feature contained in the proposed Charter.

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For information about voting, visit the League at www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org

Mock Elections 2009 in Three Area Schools

Approximately 1400 students in Bay Village, North Olmsted, and Valley Forge (Parma) High Schools will participate in a three-day simulated election experience in October that will highlight the mayoral election in their communities. The Mock Election in each school will include student voter registration, a LWV mayoral Candidate Forum with questions prepared by the students, a two-page LWV Voters Guide for each election to use in classroom discussions, culminating with a local ballot election in cooperation with the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections.

The mock election activities will be conducted by 50 LWV volunteers and the Government teachers in each school, coordinated by the project director Julia Arnold-Hess. **Watch your mailbox and www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org for YOUR opportunity to volunteer for this exciting project.** Funding for Engaging A New Generation of Voters Mock Elections has been provided by member contributions to the LWV Cuyahoga Area Education Fund, Inc.

First Thursdays: Women Who Know Their Place

The seventh season of the League's popular speaker series – **First Thursdays** – will spotlight successful and unique women in their special fields.

Women Who Know Their Place:

- ...in Communication/ Media **November 5**
- ...in the Arts **December 3**
- ...in Politics **February 4**
- ...in Global Activism **March 4**
- ...in Science/ Environment **April 8**

The five-program series will be held in Trinity Commons at Trinity Cathedral, 2230 Euclid Ave, 7 – 9 p.m. Project coordinator for the season's First Thursdays series is Kathy Woodbridge, heading a group of dedicated LWV volunteers.

First Thursdays are **free and open to the public** with funding provided by member contributions to LWV Cuyahoga Area Education Fund, Inc.

Presidents' Column August 2009

Autumn has just arrived and LWV Cuyahoga Area members are in the midst of candidate forums, voter guides and ballot issue forums. It's been a very busy summer and fall so far!

In May, Mary Lou Jones, executive director of the Education Fund, coordinated the publication of a new 16 panel brochure: *Citizen Guide to Cuyahoga County Government: Past, Present, Future*. Thank you to authors Lynda Mayer and Janice Patterson and to Bonnie App for layout and design. If you haven't seen this informative brochure, you can download it from our website, www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org.

In June, the Cuyahoga Area board agreed to **support the proposed Cuyahoga County charter that would replace the current three-commissioner system with an executive-council system**. Over 50 League volunteers collected 2000+ signatures to help with the effort of putting this plan for reform on the November ballot. Our op-ed in support of the proposed plan was featured prominently in the Sunday Forum section of the Plain Dealer. We held petition signing events at Tower City and Bay Days and made an appearance on WKYC-TV news. Yes, we have been very busy! Again, please look at the information on our website about this important issue.

We are continuing our popular mock election project in area high schools again this fall, this time focusing on mayoral races. We will kick off our **First Thursdays** series on November 5. Look for further information on these two projects in this Voter.

As co-presidents for the next two years, we plan to serve the 48 communities within our area with the kind of voter service, voter education and issue advocacy the public (and our members) have come to expect from the League of Women Voters.

By now you have received your membership renewal for the 2009-2010 year. If you haven't already renewed, please take a few minutes to do so. Your support ensures that we can continue our important work this coming year. We look forward to seeing you soon at a forum, meeting or other event. Even better, bring a friend with you to enjoy the dialogue.

Janet and Susan

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY - EMBRACING THE FUTURE

We in the League tend to pride ourselves on remaining true to our principles. But while we are busy observing, considering, talking amongst ourselves around dining room tables, the world is moving on. A large percentage of our members still do not use e-mail (or have not provided an e-mail address), forcing us to send out information via slow, and costly, mail. The evidence is in this very newsletter – having to write up the final copy with sufficient lead time and so requiring us to “miss” dates for candidates nights and to not have the official issue number for the Charter.

Candidate Forums: The Format

Voter Service is especially busy in the summer and fall of 2009 because of the municipal races in our communities. By the time you read this, the LWV Cuyahoga Area League and its chapters will have held the following Candidates Nights: **Sept. 17 (mayoral candidates only) and Sept. 21 (all other contested races) in North Olmsted; Sept. 22 in Bay Village; Sept. 24 in Fairview Park. At this time, other Candidates Nights are scheduled for Oct. 8 in Cleveland Hts./University Hts.; and in Lakewood on either October 20 or 22, depending on the outcome of the Lakewood primary on Sept. 8.**

Our Candidates' Nights utilize a specific format that allows us to follow our mission to educate voters and to stimulate voter interest and participation in the election process.

These public forums are organized as a public service and are not intended to promote or advance one candidate over another. To that end, we follow a specific format for all of our Candidates' Forums. A member who has received training moderates the forum. Each candidate is given a specific time to present an opening and a closing statement. Members, acting as timers, keep the program moving along.

During the opening statements, members circulate among the audience to distribute index cards on which those in attendance can write questions directed to candidates. Members, acting as screeners, check over the questions for appropriate language and duplication. The screeners then give the index cards to the moderator who reads the questions to the candidates. Some questions are directed to specific candidates; some are for all the candidates. Any candidate is, of course, encouraged to answer any question, even if it has been directed to another candidate. The timers make certain that the program continues in the time that has been agreed upon. The candidates who have been invited to participate are made aware of the format and the time set aside for each section of the forum.

LWV is a political and a nonpartisan organization. This forum format allows us to continue our tradition.

Won't you please consider signing up for a free e-mail account through your local library – on Yahoo or Google, and then check your account weekly (which also takes you to your library weekly! Isn't that a good thing?) And if you have provided the League with your e-mail address, won't you consider the next step and sign up on Facebook to become a “friend” of the League of Women Voters Cuyahoga Area! Today's young adults – our future membership base, are already bypassing e-mail for Facebook and Twitter.

Just send an e-mail to LWVCuyAreaOutreach@gmail.com and ask to be added to the list.

Support League-Sponsored Charter Reform continued:

For years, League had asked the Commissioners to put just such a Charter Commission on the ballot, but **multiple studies have now been conducted and lead to the same conclusions.** The Commissioners' last-minute action can be seen as a strategy to dilute and divide the current citizen demand for change which threatens their status quo. Voters MUST understand this.

Briefly, the key reasons for supporting the charter are:

1. Separating the executive and legislative functions leads to numerous effective checks and balances against abuse of power by a single strong County leader.
2. A Council of 11 would both represent the County's diverse districts and have the power to pass ordinances, investigate wrongdoing in the bureaucracy, and, importantly, debate County policy in the open.
3. Appointing rather than electing seven of the eight independent row offices leads to an integrated, professionally administered executive branch, which eliminates duplication, patronage and waste.
4. New safeguards against corruption and patronage include mandatory internal audits, centralized employment standards for workers, a Code of Ethics, possible Recall elections, and a Charter amendment process.
5. Powerful new focus on both Economic Development and Regional Collaboration will produce new initiatives to reverse County decline.

Please note that these competing issues have not been numbered at time of publication. The two issues can be distinguished, essentially, by their length and detail. The proposed Charter, which the League is sponsoring, is a fully-detailed revision of the current Charter. The competing issue, proposed by the County Commissioners, is simply a proposal that a Charter Commission be formed – a panel to review the Charter and present their proposed revisions.

This Charter deserves the support of all County citizens.

LWV Cuyahoga Area Board of Directors:

Co-Presidents: Susan Jankite, Janet Kershaw

Vice Presidents: Carol Gibson/Membership,

Lynda Mayer/Program & Advocacy, Bonnie App/Outreach,

Nikki Salupo/Voter Service, Susan Gray/Secretary,

Jean Seasholtz/Treasurer

LWV Cuyahoga Area Education Fund, Inc. Exec. Director:

Mary Lou Jones

Media Contact: Joan Hirsh

What brought you to the table?



Nikki Salupo

We often hear that new members come in when we ask them to join. It seems so simple, and yet can seem so difficult to do. We are introducing a new feature in this issue, asking one of our members to talk about their reasons for joining. Read Nikki's inspiring words, and think a bit about what brought you to the League table, and then give some thought to the people you know who might just be waiting for a reason to join us.

When I retired from teaching, I was looking to join an organization that would allow me to continue educating others and would make me feel a part of something larger. The other ladies groups that I tried left me wanting more. One day an invitation to join LWVUS came in the mail, I sent in my check and waited. A few weeks later Joanne Nurenburg knocked on my door and invited me to a Thursday Forum. On the way to Trinity Commons, she explained that she was a member of the Fairview Park Chapter. Since I lived in Fairview Park, I would be considered one of them. I went to the Forum, saw some other people I knew, like Kathy Woodbridge, and decided that I liked this organization, its enthusiastic members and its mission. Joanne has since moved to Oberlin, but by then, I had been adopted by Jo Crabtree, Jan Reser, Sally Hughes, and all the other wonderful people who made up the Fairview Chapter of the LWV. The next year I became its secretary, then its co-chair, and then eventually a Cuyahoga County Area VP in charge of Voter Service. It is not only a wonderful organization but also a community of wise and caring women. As a League member, I feel I am doing important work.

The League of Women Voters,
a nonpartisan political organization,
encourages informed and active participation
in government, works to increase understanding
of major public policy issues, and influences
public policy through education and advocacy.

For membership information,
call: 216-781-0555,
email LWVCuyAreaMembership@gmail.com
or visit us on the Web at

www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org

**LWV Cuyahoga Area BOOK CLUB
Selections for the 2009/2010 year**

The Book Club has gotten organized. After a year of selecting books as we went along, the book club has put together a reading calendar for the year. Check out the list of books below and see if any strike your fancy. The book club is open to any and all. If you need directions to any of the host's homes, feel free to contact the host or Carol Gibson – 216-932-8733.

October 4, Sunday at 7:00 pm.

Lords of Finance: The Bankers Who Broke the World, by Liaquat Ahamed. Discussion Leaders: Maryann and Geoff Barnes; Hosts: Linda Tobin and Stephen Pepper

January 10, Sunday at 7:00 pm.

Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA by Tim Weiner. Discussion Leaders: Roslyn and Dick Talerico; Host: Lynda Mayer.

February 28, Sunday at 7:00 pm.

The Conscience of a Liberal by Paul Krugman. Discussion Leader: Lolly Jacobsen; Hosts: Tom and Carol Gibson.

March 21, Sunday at 7:00 pm. *Just How Stupid are We? Facing the Truth about the American Voter*, by Rick Shenkman. Discussion Leader: Lynda Mayer; Host: Lolly Jacobsen

Important Dates to Mark on Your Calendar

September 29 Early Voting Begins
October 5 Last Day to Register to Vote
October 30 Mail Absentee Ballots by this Date
November 3 Vote
November 5 First Thursdays begin today:
Trinity Cathedral, 2230 Euclid Ave, 7 – 9 p.m

For a complete listing of events and information about voting, visit the calendar and the “voting booth” on the website:

www.LWVCuyahogaArea.org

Current information is also sent via the League’s monthly member e-newsletter. If you’re not signed up yet, send a message to: LWVCuyAreaOutreach@gmail.com

When you join the League of Women Voters Cuyahoga Area, you also become a member of the League of Women Voters Ohio and the League of Women Voters United States.

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