



The Voter

February 2016

League of Women Voters Johnson County, Iowa

From the President

As we near the date for the Iowa Caucus, I am more than ever cognizant of the importance of having people engaged in the political process for the long haul, and not merely for a Presidential election.

Voting is always important, whether for the President or for the County Supervisor, as some of us did recently. The hysteria and in some cases irrational behavior leading up to this Presidential election is counter-productive to good governance. The League of Women Voters has been about understanding, in depth, the issues at hand, coming to positions after much study, and then lobbying for our positions in a respectful manner. The League is also about educating the public concerning issues and candidates, hence our public education programs and Legislative and Candidate forums, which are conducted in a strictly non-partisan manner. Sound bites and angry retorts will not further progress in our country. More than ever what is needed is sustained civic engagement by all of our citizens. This has been the League's mission since the founding in 1920, and this mission and the League is more relevant than ever today.

Please read through this edition of the Voter and see all we are trying to do to improve civic engagement, and join us in our initiatives.

Legislative Forums

The next LWVJC Legislative Forum will be on Saturday, February 27, 9:30-11:30am in the Coralville City Council Chambers. The forum will highlight environmental concerns and will be cosponsored by the Sierra Club and Environmental Advocates. Syndy Conger will be our moderator.

Forums provide an opportunity for dialogue between legislators and their constituents. Senators Joe Bolkcom, Robert Dvorsky, Kevin Kinney, and Representatives Dave Jacoby, Vicki Lensing, Mary Mascher, Bobby Kaufmann and Sally Stutsman have been invited to attend.

The March 26 forum will be at the North Liberty City Council Chambers.

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February Calendar

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Date	Time	Location	Program
Jan. 31	2:00 PM	ICPL	Speaker Series – Jim Leach, “Fostering a Culture of Civility”
Feb. 10	1:00 – 2:30 PM	Coralville Public Library, Room B	National and Local League Program Planning
Feb. 15	1:30 – 3:00 PM	ICPL	LWVJC Board of Directors Meeting
Feb. 27	9:30 – 11:30 AM	Coralville City Council Chamber	Legislative Forum
Feb. 28	2:00 PM	ICPL	Speaker Series – Speaker TBA
March 10	10:00 AM– 3:00 PM	Des Moines Statehouse	Capitol Day for all Iowa Leagues to lobby our legislators
March 16	5:00 – 7:00 PM	Audrey Moeller’s home	Making Connections meeting – hearing report from Affordable Housing Committee
March 21	1:30 – 3:00 PM	ICPL	LWVJC Board of Directors Meeting
March 26	9:30 – 11:30 AM	North Liberty City Council Chamber	Legislative Forum

**Don't forget to caucus
February 1, 2016**

Find out where at

http://www.johnson-county.com/dept_auditor.aspx?id=17909

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Interested in Studying a Particular Issue? LWV Program Planning May Be for You

One of the reasons for the political effectiveness of the League of Women Voters is its reputation for thorough study. The League is aware of a community's issues and political complexities. League members care about the world around them. So, the League studies political and governmental issues and ultimately takes action.

Every even-numbered year, the national League of Women Voters looks ahead to decide if the organization wants to study any national or international issue on which we don't have a current position. We also review local or regional issues to determine if the LWV of Johnson County needs to study something new. We may decide to recommend a new study to the LWVUS for adoption at the June National Convention or local issue to the LWVJC. This Program Planning process, to discuss potential new studies, will be on **Wednesday, February 10 (1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.) at the Coralville Public Library, Room B.**

This past year we have studied, discussed and taken consensus on two major national issues: Money in Politics and Amending the U.S. Constitution. Members need to discuss if we want to take on a new federal issue for study, or as our national League president Elisabeth MacNamara has suggested, focus on action. We also need to address local issues. At our annual meeting last year we decided to look at two positions: affordable housing and the current Iowa City home rule charter. A committee has been addressing the housing update and will present it to the members in March. The board, facing a full agenda for the year and following discussion from the annual meeting about the timeline for change, decided not to move forward on the charter review this year.

So, if you have ideas for new study or you want to learn more about the League process for study and action, plan on attending the February 9 program planning meeting.

Making Connections: Affordable Housing

March is too early to even think about spring cleaning, right? Why not look for another way to study houses? Why not substitute a pleasant early evening at Audrey Moeller's house on Wednesday, March 16, 2016, 5 to 7 pm, "making connections" with fellow League members and talking about the need for more fair and affordable housing in Johnson County?

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County has had a housing position since 1992, updated in 2003. Then in the winter of 2015, when local newspapers reported that recently published studies indicated a serious shortage of affordable housing in the county, and especially in the urban areas where people work and would like to live, members at the annual Program Planning meeting decided to revisit the position to make sure that it was still the most effective advocacy tool possible. A year later, the Housing Study Update group has completed its review and has a draft of proposed revisions of the position that it would like to show to League members and to hear them talk about. Come and join the conversation and help the LWVJC's Housing Position to be as informative as we can make it to anyone wishing to advocate on this issue locally.

[For more information about the meeting or for a copy in advance of the proposed revisions, contact Syndy Conger (syndy@mchsi.com).]

Jim Leach to Launch League Speaker Series Jan. 31

Every four years, in mid-winter the focus shifts to the Iowa Caucuses and the presidential election when politicians visit the state to secure their party's nomination as president. After crisscrossing the state, they can sense the countdown and whether they will be successful in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina. In the process, their rhetoric can get nasty, making it difficult for Iowa voters to decide who receives or has earned their support. We won't know whether politicians' talk is all show in hopes the camera will persuade voters to cast a ballot for them, until we see what they do after the election.

In Johnson County we are fortunate to have former Congressman Jim Leach to sort out the political wrangling and help us understand how candidates then get down to the nation's business. Today, Mr. Leach serves the role as the University of Iowa Visiting Professor of Law, Senior Scholar and Chair in Public Affairs. He is the lead-off speaker in a new League Sunday Speaker Series addressing "Civility in Politics" Sunday, Jan. 31. His talk will be held at 2 p.m. in the Iowa City Public Library. It is free and open to the public.

League President Gaylen Wobeter will introduce Mr. Leach, who was a high school classmate at Davenport High School.

The distinguished Congressman served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1977 to 2007 where he was chair of the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services from 1995 to 2001. He also served on the Committee of International relations, chair of the subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs from 2001 to 2006. He founded and co-chaired the Congressional Humanities Caucus.

Following Mr. Leach's presentation, the audience will be able to ask questions. We hope you will attend and bring your friends.

Fund Raising

Later this month we will be sending out our annual fund request. If you read this newsletter, you are aware of all we do to promote effective, participatory, transparent government at all levels. We will carry on, no matter what, but we hope that you will support us with a financial gift. If you don't receive a letter and would like to donate, email Polly Horton, pollyshorton@aol.com and she will send a form.

LWVJC Resolutions for the 2016 caucuses

LWVJC Resolutions for the 2016 Caucuses were written on priority issues of the Iowa LWV and edited by the Advocacy Committee of LWVJC. We suggest you choose several to submit to your precinct caucus on Monday, February 1. The resolutions require your name, address and contact information on a separate sheet of 8 1/2 X 11 paper for EACH resolution. We will send you a “user friendly” copy at the end of next week. The print will be larger and include lines for your name.

- We support modernization of Iowa’s election laws so all eligible Iowans may register to vote online using the Secretary of State’s website by August 2016. We also believe felons who have completed their criminal sentences should have voting rights restored.
- We support fully funding the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program. We also support protecting Iowa’s water resources by increasing funding for the Nutrient Reduction Strategy and requiring participation in the program.
- We support the elimination of mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenders.
- We support adequate funding for treatment for children and teens that were victims of human trafficking.
- We support enacting laws and policies to immediately increase the capacity of the state’s mental health workforce.
- We support enacting policies that guarantee access for all residents to comprehensive and affordable health services including a full range of reproductive services.
- We support transparency in campaign funding and reporting.
- We support full funding Iowa’s programs to assist victims of assault.
- We support four year old preschool as a requirement in all school districts. We support funding of universal preschool to eliminate waiting lists and guarantee access in all areas of the state.
- We support the requirement that the Iowa Legislature comply with the Iowa Law in setting Pre K through 12 education allowable growth funding.
- We support legislation that will eliminate current loopholes in Iowa’s gun safety laws for attaining and purchase of guns and weapons.
- We support the minimally acceptable standards and stable funding for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and fire services which are “essential services” across the state.

Member Spotlight- Championing Liberties and Local Policies; Recalling League History

Only a few current League of Women Voters members have studied as many of Johnson County's modern-day issues as **Carol Spaziani**. This California-raised woman said that in the early 1960s, the LWVJC had 300 members. "Many were stay-at-home mothers with babies. The League was an interesting thing to do."

Her political science professor at UCLA urged his students to become active in a political party and suggested joining the League of Women Voters would be a good way to learn about one's community. As soon as Spaziani settled in Iowa City, she followed his advice. Carol has served on the League Board as co-president and vice-president, but her main interest through the years has been study and action on numerous local issue committees such as county and regional government, and most recently as an advocacy committee co-chair.

Carol has worked on various issues including a state Judicial Reform Amendment (passed in 1962) employing a merit selection and retention election process for judges. Beverly Full, Mary Ann Madden and Lolly Eggers were key players, as were Jean Hubbard, Jean Lloyd Jones, Ann Feddersen and Mary Bryant. "Friendships forged in this way lasted a lifetime", she says.

The merit selection system involved a nonpartisan commission that reviewed applicants' qualifications for judicial office. After a commission screening and interview, a slate of nominees was forwarded to the governor who makes the final appointment.

About the same time, the Iowa League was involved in a Reapportionment Study of the Iowa Legislature spearheaded by Minnette Doderer. Various strategies were tried, such as a constitutional convention, but they failed. Carol says the Farm Bureau was opposed. At the time, Jean Lloyd-Jones was President of the local League (she became state League president in the late 1960s). To overcome political resistance to reapportionment, LWVJC joined several other organizations in filing a law suit demanding that the court order it done. The Court ruled to reapportion and the result was "one man, one vote." LWVIA and the Iowa legislature set out to find the fairest non-partisan method of drawing district boundaries. The result was a system which is still considered one of the best in the country. In most other states political party-dominated legislatures determine district boundaries.

"The early days were exciting. They became even more exciting when in 1964 LWVJC member Mori Costantino got involved in a LWVJC survey on fair housing conceived by Iowa City's Human Rights Commission," Carol says. "We asked two questions. 1) Do you rent houses in Iowa City? 2) Do you discriminate? They all said, 'Yes.'"

"The Board of Realtors and Home Builders Association were opposed to a fair housing ordinance. When the time came for a City Council public hearing, Mori enlisted engineering professor Phil Hubbard to make a speech. He told the audience he wasn't able to buy a home until he asked a white friend for help. You could have heard a pin drop. After Phil's speech, the Council voted to adopt the City's first Fair Housing Ordinance."

In the early 1960s the League supported urban renewal for Iowa City's Central Business District (CBD). "CBD businesses didn't want it, but the League did," Carol says. The controversy lasted for at least 10 years. Nancy Seiberling took a busload of business people

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and League members to the John Deere Administrative Center in East Moline. She arranged to meet with the president who believed in investing in original art for the Center. Nancy, a founder of Project GREEN, hoped to demonstrate to downtown businessmen the value of ascetically pleasing architecture and environment. (Note: Through the years, Iowa City has updated its streetscape, many of Nancy Seiberling's touches can still be seen in the downtown.)

Of her 1959 move to Iowa City, Carol says, "We were among the first reverse wave of emigration (to Iowa)." She had received her B.A. at UCLA and worked at the Biomedical Library while her then husband, Gene, was working on his doctorate in endocrinology. The couple lived in London for a year before settling in Iowa City permanently. She was always interested in attending a Library Science school, and had searched for the two closest – Madison, Wis., and Champaign, Ill. (The University of Iowa did not have a Library Science school until the 1970s.)

Carol chose Champaign thinking it was closer to Iowa City and the UI where Gene had accepted a job. While studying for her graduate degree, the Cornbelt Rocket and Illinois Central were transportation to and from school. Living in an attic room with three other politically conservative women, Carol discovered she was a California radical. After earning her Masters of Library Science, Carol worked a temporary job at the UI Main Library where she was not eligible for a permanent position because her husband was on the faculty. After President Sandy Boyd received complaints from other librarians about the policy, he called Leslie Dunlap (head librarian) urging a change.

After volunteering for the Iowa City Public Library, which was in the old Carnegie building, Carol was hired in 1968. "It was fun, but traumatic," explains Carol, who became head of technical services and had to relearn cataloging. MLS librarians were then in short supply, she adds.

At the time ICPL professional librarians were not allowed to work part-time. A change in library administration reformed that policy, and Carol moved into the reference department. She was reassigned to the service-to-business area and was responsible for taking library displays to Chamber and business meetings.

Carol and her husband spent a sabbatical year in Chicago in 1968-69. Upon her return she joined Citizens Against the War in Vietnam. Carol recalls the committee couldn't meet in the library because it didn't represent both sides of the issue. As a result, political parties were not allowed either. She said Gertrude MacQueen helped change that policy, and Carol used the ACLU's Freedom of Information policy to rewrite the library's position allowing nearly 500 local nonprofit organizations, regardless of political or religious persuasion, use of the library's meeting rooms.

Carol says, "Through the years my personal interests crossed paths with my professional interests working at the Library. Our community was always changing. The Public Library was a great place to work. I never got bored."

Carol's impact on the Johnson County area is profound. On her retirement from ICPL, library colleagues created an annual Intellectual Freedom Festival in her honor recognizing her role celebrating banned books.