

League of Women Voters of Salt Lake
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The Salt Lake Voter

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April Unit Meetings

Update on Air Quality in Salt Lake

Did you know that: Cars are driven 75 percent more miles today than 20 years ago? Cars emit 90 percent less pollution than 20 years ago? Mobile source air pollution accounts for more than 50% of air pollution in Salt Lake? Heavy duty trucks and off-road equipment also emit large quantities of pollution?

Did you know that Utah has not violated **any** of the federal health standards in the last decade? (However, we are close to violations of the fine particle and ozone standards.)

Can we declare victory and stop worrying about air pollution? No! Come to your April unit meetings to hear more about current issues in air quality. Air quality study material will be sent separately.

Mary Wilson's Visit

Mary Wilson, LWVUS advocacy chair and president elect, will speak to League members on April 5 at the Anderson-Foothill Library from 2 -5 PM.

The session from 2-3:30 pm is for League members to discuss League issues. She will give details about the LWVUS membership recruitment campaign. At 4 PM the League is inviting Leaguers and guests for a session on advocacy. — can we *really* make a difference? Mary will bring us up to date on national issues and help us with local advocacy issues.

Most League members do not attend the national LWV conventions—so meeting with Mary is the next best thing. Bring husbands, friends, neighbors to the 4 pm session.

State of the Community Luncheon

April 12, 2005

Dr. Fred Montague

Population, Democracy and Sustainability

See page 3 for the details.

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President's Letter

By Joyce Barnes

That gigantic sigh you heard about 12:05 a.m. on March 2 came from our diligent lobby corps as the 2006 legislative session came to a close. And on March 11 they shared the ups and downs of the 45-day adventure (ordeal? slog?). When you see Kathy Dorn, Peggy Christenson, Ann O'Connell, Mary Fogg, Susan Aldous, Anne Ziegler, Marie Fulmer, Kathy Van Dame, and Sandy Peck, give them a hug and say thank you—braving bad weather, impossible parking, faces inscrutable, happy or frowning—they persevered and the legislators knew we were there. So did the other lobbyists (most of them paid handsomely). And we know the facts our folks presented were accurate and well-researched.

Of course, we still had to wait awhile to see what Governor Huntsman would sign and veto—much to our relief he did veto at least three of the bills we were most concerned with—and he agreed with our reasoning too!

Our first foray into Sunshine Week activities began March 12 with a live feed from the National Press Club discussing “Are We Better Off in the Dark?” This program was presented a second time on March 17 at the Main Library. Partnering with the Salt Lake Library staff (particularly Ann Menzies and Matt McClain) gave us the technical know-how to tape the video so our audience and panelists could view it before we had our own Salt Lake City discussion about open government and open records. Although attendance was not what we'd hoped for (a Friday night and St. Patrick's Day) the information and insight provided by Ken Verdoia of KUED, Karen Shepherd back from London and former Congresswoman

representing our Second District, Linda Peterson currently the President of the Utah Association of Professional Journalists and Jonathon Brown from KWPW. If you missed it, not to worry, KPWC taped the discussion and will air it sometime in the future.

Sunshine Week began in Florida in 2002, led by the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors. Now, the LWVUS (along with the American Library Association, among others) have joined and we hope to involve more organizations and the public by calling attention to current threats to open government. One additional piece of information: LWVUS and Common Cause issued a statement expressing concern over a recent incident involving the League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties in Michigan. The full statement is on the LWVUS web site, www.lwv.org. So far no one has come to see me, but my nephew is a FBI agent, so maybe I am exempt!

My great hope is that our LWVUT will join LWVSL to continue the dialogue, hold unit meetings, put articles in their newsletters, provide copies of the October 2005 *National Voter* to friends and hold unit meetings to discuss the “Local Voices” project final report. Both of us are on the LWVUS website. I'm certain that some interested souls will think about research in partnership with libraries, college and universities, newspapers, broadcast media, and/or local chapters of other national groups. Truly we have enough local developments on openness and secrecy for material!

Our April activities include unit meetings on air quality. Ann O'Connell has chaired the group preparing the material and will be at the unit discussions with Jan Miller from the Utah Division of Air Quality.

And—of course—the Community Luncheon is on April 12. Invitations have been sent—if you didn't get one, call the office or Nancy Melling. Claire Geddes will receive our recognition for her citizen advocacy and our speaker, Fred Montague, Professor of Biology at the University of Utah, has a reputation for being an outstanding speaker—loss of good reliable information and entertainment at the same time. You won't want to miss this event—he is a wood-printer, too using a 1913 device! We look forward to seeing you there!

In May we will be discussing the RDA study recently completed by the State League. More to come.

June 5 is our annual meeting—to be held at Mary Buchanan's condo clubhouse. Program planning will be the main focus—plus, of course, good food, animated conversation, voting and welcoming our new board. See you there.

Kudos to Pat Nielsen who was honored as Woman of the Year by the Wasatch Branch of AAUW!

The 14th Annual State of the Community Luncheon

By Nancy Melling

On Wednesday, April 12, the League of Women Voters of Salt Lake is holding its 14th annual State of the Community Luncheon. I hope you will share your invitation with friends and acquaintances and anyone you think might enjoy the occasion. And, I hope you will come as well.

The luncheon is the League's major fund raiser each year and it also affords us the opportunity to honor a member of the community who exemplifies the ideals of

the league. In recent years we have honored Irene Fisher, Boyer Jarvis, Afton Bradshaw, and Olene Walker. Our honoree this year is Claire Geddes, a tireless worker on behalf of the citizens of Utah. She created and organized United We Stand America-Utah, helped form Utah Legislative Watch, served on an advisory council for HEAL Utah and has been associated with many other organizations. At present she, along with Roger Ball, former director of the Committee of Consumer Services, is appealing a natural gas rate increase.

Our speaker is Fred Montague, a professor of biology at the University of Utah. Teaching courses in wildlife ecology, environmental science, literature of ecology, global environmental issues and global gardening, he has been selected as the outstanding university academic adviser, "Professor of the Year" in biology, and his service-learning course, Global Environmental Issues, has been selected as "Service-Learning Course of the Year." Each year we ask our speaker to talk about "the state of the community" from his or her perspective. Professor Montague has chosen to speak to our luncheon guests on, "Population, Democracy and Sustainability."

The success of the luncheon enables the League to produce studies, keep the public informed about local, state and national issues of interest to the League, and to advocate for League positions at the local and state levels. It also means that we do not have to increase dues and/or keep asking League members for more money to support our work.

So, mark your calendar, call in your reservations for the luncheon, bring your friends, honor Claire and be enlightened by our outstanding speaker, Fred Montague.

Sunshine Week at the Library

Sunshine Week 2006: Are we Safer in the Dark?

By Sandy Peck

Ever since September 11, we have been trying to find a balance between security and open, accountable government. At the national level, the Patriot Act and surveillance without court warrants have raised questions of protecting civil rights and the duty of the courts and Congress to protect individuals from unchecked or illegal executive power. Here in Utah, the legislature has proposed to close some records, particularly emails, and make citizen access to records more difficult under GRAMA, the Government Records Access and Management Act. By and large those proposals didn't pass, thanks to efforts of the Media Coalition and legislators who supported open government.

On St. Patrick's Day at the main Salt Lake City Library, we gathered to talk about open government with a panel of experts: Jonathan Brown from KCPW, Linda Peterson, editor of South Valley Journal and President of the Utah Society of Professional Journalists, Karen Shepherd, former editor, state Senator and U.S. Congresswoman, and Ken Verdoia, KUED Channel 7.

Jonathan Brown started off with a remark from Senate President John Valentine to the effect that legislators don't necessarily know *better* than their constituents, but they do know *more*. The question is, why don't voters know more? They depend on the media, but the media can't do their job without information.

Experienced journalist Ken Verdoia explained that this is where GRAMA comes in. To get information from reluctant government agencies on such matters as

medical research on prisoners, the Range Canyon property title transfer, and the number of undocumented immigrants who get public health care benefits, he has made 100 GRAMA requests and 60 FOIA requests. FOIA is the federal version of GRAMA, the Freedom of Information Act.

Like other government agencies, legislators are reluctant to share information with the public. When they passed a bill to keep their Blackberry numbers private this year, they said it was to protect them from special interest calls, Linda Peterson reported. But, she said, it's their job to deal with passionate interests.

Karen Shepherd shed some light on why she and her fellow members of Congress didn't want to give out their Blackberry numbers and legislators might not want to share their emails with the public. One problem is that we are all buried in so much information that we're reluctant to take on more. Public officials also fear being sued, or fired, or not being anonymous. Another fear, particularly for elected officials, is that political enemies will use the information to campaign—and negative campaigning works.

The panelists tried to put the question of secrecy in a broader context of society today. They acknowledged that we ask for some secrecy, to protect medical information and against identity theft, for example. With laws like GRAMA and FOIA we can at least ask for information, which wasn't true in years past. But Verdoia said it's not a good time to be a journalist. The media have lost their vision and are held in low esteem by the public. He said that 28 per cent of television news coverage is violent crime and 24 percent is natural disasters. Congresswoman Shepherd's concern was the arrogance and concentration of government power. It's dangerous and

inefficient to have one-party government, she believes. Verdoia seems to agree. "The real government watchdog is not the press," he said "but partisan balance."

Welcome to Our New Members

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welcome back
*Jone Foster

Thanks to our contributors

Barbara Cowley
Doris Gras
Peggy Christensen
Sue Lind
Betsy Wolf
Pat Nielson

Stop Idling Campaign

The 6th grade class of Morningside Elementary has launched a "Stop, Turn Off and Save" campaign to help reduce pollution in the Salt Lake Valley. They competed for the Community Service award for the district, won that, and also won the state competition. Utah Clean Cities funded the making of their StopIdling Stickers and Zero Gravity worked with their classroom

designs. They are looking for a sponsor that would fund the making of more acetate stickers. If you know of anyone who would be interested, please email Patti White: pattiwhite@gmail.com.

They have a three-minute video and the eight students on the G.R.E.E.N. Team would like to share what they have learned and hopefully educate anyone interested about the problems of idling.

Member News

Dani Eyer, an attorney, is the executive director of the Utah ACLU. She is a BYU graduate and has taught physics in high school and college. Dani has appreciated the work the League does and wanted to join to be part of it.

Kathy Ann Dopp came to Utah in 1975 to ski. She lived in Park City and taught skiing. She decided to attend the University of Utah and received a masters degree in math. She taught at Rowland Hall and taught accounting at the University. Her son is an Air Force pilot who has recently returned from Iraq and is now a flight instructor. She joined to see if her concerns about voting machines could be addressed.

Nanette Kibbe Pratt is a real estate broker with Ramsey Company. She has two children and one grandchild whom she enjoys. She loves to ski and play golf. She joined at behest of Nanette Benowitz.

Not By Math Alone

"Fierce global competition prompted President Bush to use the State of the Union address to call for better math and science education, where there's evidence that many schools are falling short. We should be equally troubled by another shortcoming in American schools: Most

young people today simply do not have an adequate understanding of how our government and political system work, and they are thus not well prepared to participate as citizens.” writes former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Conner and former Colorado governor, Roy Romer, co-chairs of the national advisory council of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, in the *Washington Post*, Saturday, March 25, 2006.

They point out that two-thirds of 12th-graders scored below "proficient" on the last national civics assessment in 1998, and only 9 percent could list two ways a democracy benefits from citizen participation, noting that “young people remain highly patriotic, and many volunteer in their communities. But most are largely disconnected from current events and issues.” They propose that classes which promote civic participation as well as American government are as necessary to our future as math and science. They indicate that “Research shows that the better people understand our history and system of government, the more likely they are to vote and participate in the civic life.”

Most of my league friends have heard my conviction that part of the reason that Americans know so little history and government is that their high school classes were taught by coaches. As a former history teacher, I feel that one of the reasons that Representative Rob Bishop voted to oppose The Patriot Act was his long time experience as a high school history teacher.

The Campaign for the Civic Mission has issued several reports on the topic of civic education. According to their website www.civicmissionofschools.org, 18 states have formed coalitions or taskforces to improve civic learning for K-12 students. Utah is not mentioned on the website.

Besides requiring or enticing teachers who teach American History and government to be certified by specific classes or exams, what else might we do at the minimum to see that Utah students leave the public school system prepared for civic life? The Utah curriculum requires that American government be taught at the ninth grade level—a full three years before most students officially have a right to participate. Perhaps that should be reexamined—we all know that all people are likely to become more involved when it immediately affects them. What do you think?

Note: The latest report from the group, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, released this month, can be found on their website.

What the Units Are Saying About Access to Health Care

By Mary Fogg,

February unit discussions regarding strategies the state and federal governments should employ to ensure access to adequate health care resulted in agreement that our government needs to deal with the fact that health care rationing exists. The practice of health care providers competing with each other results in higher costs that limit access for lower income families to receive services. This current model of competition does not work with health care unless you flood the market with health care providers and health care facilities. Then, get the insurance companies with their demand for profits out of the mix. We may need to consider a system with a single payee and a variety of competitive providers. That may require our citizens to recognize the need for the federal government to establish basic standards and encourage states to follow

them. It may be time to begin to use the term Socialized Medicine!

There is a high level of political acceptance and support for our current system. It was agreed that changes must be identified and implemented to achieve access to health care for all citizens. Changes suggested included the need to push for state legislation that will provide a way for small business to cover employees and expand the "Coverage at Work Program". Additional ideas were the development of clinics in community centers such as work sites or public schools so all family members will have access to diagnosis and treatment without having to use costly hospital emergency rooms services. There was also discussion of ways to provide portability of insurance policies for those who change jobs or move to another state.

It was unanimous that our existing systems are failing miserably considering the number of low-income uninsured in Utah. They do not come close to providing access to health care. Health care rationing is frequently a reality for citizens who are low income or lack information. Our system is not working and that issue is largely related to huge political issues rather than cost. The League has always had high aspirations about such issues regardless of political barriers. Perhaps it is time to consider beginning the process to challenge the failing system. As one member commented, "it is the tradition of the League to pick stuff like this to work on so we better get started". It will take a lot of effort and a long time to succeed but it has been done before and can be done again!

Members involved in the unit discussions strongly support of the current League of Women Voters of the United States position on access to health care. "Every U. S. resident

should have access to a basic level of quality care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care, acute care, long-term care and mental health care." One unit suggested that in the event that changes are made to the national position in the future the following addition to primary care might be considered: "including but not limited to prenatal, reproductive, dental, vision and hearing." Unit members also indicated that we might want to consider adding health care to our upcoming Salt Lake program planning.

Quote of the Month

"This, then, is a story of Lincoln's political genius revealed through his extraordinary array of personal qualities that enabled him to form friendships with men who had previously opposed him, to repair injured feelings that, left untended, might have escalated into permanent hostility, to assume responsibility for the failures of subordinates, to share credit with ease; and to learn from mistakes. ...His successes in dealing with the strong egos of the men in his cabinet suggest that in the hands of a truly great politician the qualities we generally associate with decency and morality—kindness, sensitivity, compassion, honesty, and empathy—can also be impressive political resources."

Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*; page viii. Most of us forget that Lincoln's cabinet included his Republican rivals and three Democrats. His model would serve citizens well today.

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