



League of Women Voters of Utah

The Utah Voter

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Voter Editor: Nanette Benowitz

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

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Important Dates:

- March 21st: Mass Meetings
- April 5th: Lunch with LWVUS liaison Mary Wilson
- May 20th: LWVU Council hosted by Davis County
- June 9th through the 13th: LWVUS Convention in Minneapolis

Notes from the Board

Utah LWV is twice blessed in 2006. We had a visit from LWVUS President Kay Maxwell on February 1; now on Wednesday, April 5th members will meet Mary Wilson, current LWVUS advocacy chair and President-elect. We are tentatively planning an LWV member work session for Wednesday afternoon, followed by a speech on advocacy for both League and community at the downtown Salt Lake City Library auditorium at 4 pm.

President Maxwell’s whirlwind visit included an impressive talk at the Hinckley Institute on our Democracy Agenda, a luncheon meeting with League members and guests and a brief meeting with League leaders. Her visit was a nice respite from the sometimes-



harsh words and actions taking place at the 2006 Legislature. You can read her speech on page 8. She urged members to communicate with Washington via e-mail regularly.

Meanwhile, back on the Hill, that is the Washington D.C. hill, Utah representatives were casting votes pertinent to the Democracy Agenda. **The Patriot Act** was reauthorized with some amendments, although not enough safeguards for civil liberty for the National League. Senators Bennett and Hatch voted for it as did Representatives Cannon and Matheson. Representative Bishop should be congratulated for his opposition. In the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Reform Committee on March 2, Senator Bennett voted against the **Collins-Lieberman proposal** to create an Office of Public Integrity in Congress. LWVUS called the action a vote “to ignore the deep concerns of the American people about the corruption and lobbying scandals in Congress. Instead the Committee majority voted to maintain the status quo in Congress and to preserve a congressional ethics enforcement process that is completely discredited in the eyes of the American people.”

Returning to the Utah 2006 Legislative session, the disconnect between many Utah legislators and their constituents on taxes, education and social service spending and ethics, among other issues, seemed greater. I’ve had many tell me of their frustration that the lawmakers don’t seem to be responsive to citizens’ wishes. From afar it seemed that having surplus dollars made the session more uncivil. The League was there everyday and touched more people through the daily KCPW broadcasts. In addition to the time spent on the Hill, at weekly Saturday morning caucuses we discussed the issues and strategy. Thanks to our intrepid executive director Sandy Peck, whose daily legislative updates on KCPW kept people informed, and to Legislative Director Kathy Dorn who organized our lobbying activities. Thank you to all League members who served as observers and as reporters on the KCPW updates. Nanette Benowitz, with the help of Pat Klentzman, kept the website going. Particularly noteworthy was the website effort for the last three days of the legislature. Thanks Nanette and Pat!

Two items related to the 2006 session remain. First, please read the legislative action and update reports below to see how League priorities fared. Also, check out what happened to our Top 10 Bills at <http://www.lwvutah.org/legislative-wrapup.html> To see how your legislator voted on a bill, go to <http://le.utah.gov> Click on Bills Numbered, then click on the number of the bill you want, then on Bill Status, and on the vote count. Then pick up the phone or use e-mail to contact your legislators about how they voted. Finally, it’s hard to believe that the political process is beginning all over again. Candidates had until March 17 to file and mass meetings (caucuses) were scheduled for 7 pm on Tuesday, March 21. As the UEA remarks, “If you can’t change their votes, change their faces.”

In one of our League Saturday caucus sessions, discussion included the observation of one League observer that some legislators did not seem to understand that a function of the judicial branch of government is to protect minorities. This relates to the announcement from the LWVUS of a project, *Safeguarding U.S. Democracy: Promoting an Independent Judiciary by Defending the U.S. Constitution*, which proposes a large-scale public education effort to increase citizen understanding of the importance of our nation’s system of separation of powers and check and balances provided for by the U.S. Constitution. Pass-through grants are available to Leagues wanting to undertake this. For more information, visit the LWVUS website, LWV.org.

The most important component of the Democracy Agency and League activities in Utah is individuals willing to commit time and energy. We have need for volunteers for the State Board. If you have suggestions or are willing to serve yourself, please contact Nancy Cooper.

Council for League has been scheduled for Saturday, May 20. The Davis County League will be our host.

As always, there are many to thank for all their good work for the League. Thank you to Gina Rieke for her superb job as hostess for Kay Maxwell’s visit, to Nancy Wingelaar for overseeing the fundraising letter to fund our legislative activities, and to all of those who attended Saturday caucuses, observed the Legislature and picked up the phone or pen to contact legislators.

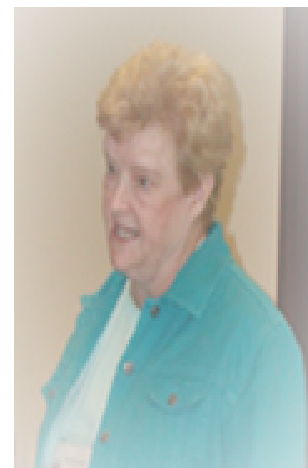
Gigi Brandt, Acting President

LWV LEGISLATIVE ACTION Kathy Dorn - Legislative Director

The time is 12:00 midnight on March 1st. and the session has closed without voting the proposed income tax bill that was supposed to “broaden the base and lower the rate.” That was the promise at so many meetings of the Tax Reform Task Force that Peggy Christensen, Marelynn Zipser, Marilyn Odell, Bonnie Fernandez, Sandy Peck and I attended during the previous year.

In the end on the last night the House could not get the debate done and circled Subst SB 242 which killed it. Our Governor is planning a special session on it (perhaps May 17) and we will be watching. Our thanks go to faithful lobby watchers Peggy Christensen, Marie Fulmer, Kathy Van Dame, Ann O’Connell, and Susan Aldous. Sandy Peck took books full of notes and provided some background history.

This session was described as the meanest in recent memory. The legislature seemed to “punish” people who depend on social agencies by not giving them money, even though there is a surplus! In my mind this was especially bad because they had so many \$\$\$\$\$. It was like kids fighting in a sand box, even when there was more than enough to go around, if you are reasonable.



UEA came up with the best quote “If you can’t change their votes, change their faces—or take their places.” And now is the time of the year to get involved at the local level by going to party caucuses (mass meetings) on Tuesday, March 21! You can elect delegates to party conventions who support the candidates you support.

League priorities included access to voting for all. The Early Voting bill passed and I urge each and every league member to get involved and help voters use the new electronic machines. Call your local county clerk and find out how to help. They will be delighted.

A discussion about the bills we worked on follows and I hope you will read it and let your legislator know how you feel about the way they voted on any of the issues. Legislators can be reached by going to our web page at www.lwvutah.org and clicking on Senate or House to email and for postal addresses. Emails, postcards and letters are welcome.

All of us who were there often heard over and over how happy legislators and others were that the League was there watching. It means a lot to them to see our rational objective presence at the Capitol.

Legislative Wrap up 2006

Sandy Peck, LWVU- Executive Director

What we learned at the Legislature . . .

One of the great things about observing and lobbying the legislature is how much you can learn, even without traveling to the Hill. The legislature’s website has so much information about bills and legislators and allows us to listen to House, Senate and committee debates. We have even gone back to those debates now that the session is over. (You may have seen us listening and shaking our heads in astonishment.)

Media coverage was invaluable. While Senator Stephenson and others criticized the media “killer bees” we continued to depend on what was almost always accurate coverage. In fact the League suggested in committee that both legislators and the public depend on media for information although we don’t like to see them play “gotcha.”

Help from other organizations and lobbyists was essential. We could not begin to name them all but Utah Children, Utah Issues, Coalition of Religious Communities, Salt Lake Community Action, Disability Law Center, Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities, county election officials, Utah League of Cities and Towns, UEA, PTA, HEAL, and Utah Taxpayers Association would have to be on the list.

Despite all these resources, we are still learning and wonder how much more progress could have been made on League priorities if we had only known a little more. . .



TAX REFORM including income tax (**Subst. SB 242 - Bramble**) and sales tax on food policy (**3rd Subst HB 109 - Newbold**) was a League priority.

Income Tax

We all heard for months about the “flatter” income tax that lowered the top rate from 7 to 4.975% and broadened the tax base by providing personal exemptions and credits only for charitable contributions and home ownership. Yet by the end of the session many of us still had questions—including the House of Representatives—which on the last night of the session refused to vote on it.

What we still need to know:

1. Exactly what deductions are being given up (besides retirement income, the renewable energy tax credit and the savings plan for college tuition, for example). How many taxpayers will be affected? How much will that really broaden the tax base?
2. The 4.975% tax rate was described as competitive with the top rate in other states for attracting new businesses and their CEOs to Utah. But what is the evidence that lowering the rate is a major factor in those decisions, especially compared to funding a better education system for workers and their families—funding that would be cut by lowering the tax rate?
3. Will reforms treat taxpayers in low, middle and high income brackets fairly, so that all will pay a similar proportion of their income on all taxes?

Sales Tax on Food

Both houses approved reducing the rate of the sales tax on food by 2 percentage points (3rd Subst HB 109.) The League has a long-standing position against the sales tax on food. But we also favor replacing the lost revenue (over \$172 million to the state and almost \$13 million to local government) in order to meet human service, transportation and education needs. We have supported making up revenue by increasing individual and corporate income taxes and raising the sales tax on other items. We supported taxing personal services to broaden the tax base and to reflect the growing service sector of our economy. We opposed increasing tax exemptions for businesses unless they would create new jobs at high wage levels.

It was gratifying to see sales tax breaks for business end up totaling less than \$20 million, compared to proposed state and local cuts of almost \$75 million (**SB 29 and 30 - Bramble and Subst SB 31 - Stephenson**). A proposed corporate franchise tax cut (**Subst HB 53 - Harper**) failed in the Senate.

Mid-session, the League Lobby Corps pondered whether we should continue to support removing the food tax as a means to help those in poverty. We knew that would take money from services such as health care that were urgently needed. Our reasoning finally was that the surplus was large enough to pay for both.

We also doubted that the revenue saved by continuing to tax food would really go to human services, and we were right. It went to transportation.

What we still need to know:

- Taxing personal services was never considered. Why not?
- Still unexplained: do business tax breaks really stimulate the economy enough to make up for losing revenue needed to educate the workforce?
- Why doesn't the state issue general obligation bonds for more of our transportation needs? This would free up some sales tax revenue for urgent human services, and the cost of interest on the bonds would be more than offset by avoided inflation costs.



HEALTH CARE ACCESS was our second priority. Health insurance—Medicaid, public and private—was the focus this year.

Subst HB 215 PEHP Risk Pool Amendments- D. Clark passed. It takes advantage of the lower administrative overhead costs of the Public Employees Health Plan (PEHP) that serves state employees (3.8% compared to the insurance industry average of 15%) by including in its coverage institutions of higher education with enrollments of less than 15,000 and independent entities.

One question: Exactly what is an "independent entity?"

Three promising insurance bills failed:

1. A proposal to save on prescription drug costs by forming a purchasing pool made up of all state agencies (**2 Subst HB 79 Prescription Drug Purchasing Pools - Last**) was pared down to simply authorize a legislative audit of current state drug purchasing practices, but even that failed the Senate.
2. A Medicaid bill (**2 Subst HB 24 Medicaid Dental and Physician Reimbursement Amendments - Mascaro**) would have made dental services for more children on Medicaid available by raising the reimbursement rate for dentists. The original cost of HB 24 went up when the substitute bill added higher reimbursement rates for physicians as well as for dentists. Did that change doom the bill? Why were physicians added?
3. (**2nd Subst HB 122 Utah Small Business Health Plan- Mascaro**) A plan to help small businesses provide affordable insurance for their employees, possibly by joining forces with PEHP was amended down to an advisory council dominated by private insurance companies with no public representation, but it still didn't pass.
4. One "good failure" in the House was **HB334 Public Employees Health Plan Option- Hutchings**. It would have allowed PEHP covered state employees to opt for a high deductible health savings account. Although that would allow employees more choice and a chance to build a nest egg for health care, it would draw younger, healthier employees out of the pool, leaving the employer (the state of Utah) with a less healthy population. That would increase the cost of health insurance to the rest of the pool and the state. Several legislators familiar with insurance explained this "adverse selection" problem.

What we still need to know:

- What are insurance companies doing to help small businesses now?
- How can health insurance be made less expensive and more accessible?
- Why shouldn't the public and legislators be included in deliberations on this issue of affordable health insurance?

How can we find out more about health insurance? Two sources might be the Privately Owned Health Care Organization Task Force and the Utah Health Policy Project, which is exploring ways to provide quality care to all Utahns through a nonprofit private trust fund.



ELECTION PROCESS is always a League priority. This year two bills passed that are intended to reduce the high cost of new electronic voting equipment that will be used in the 2006 election.

HB 13 Common Polling Places- Aagard allows more precincts (therefore more voting machines) to be located in a common polling place. This should shorten the long lines that develop before and after work hours. A disadvantage could be having to travel farther to vote. Each county must have at least two polling places and each polling place must have at least one voting device accessible for individuals with disabilities.

HB 15 Early Voting - Aagard will allow voting during the 14 days prior to Election Day. If voters take advantage of this, fewer will be voting on Election Day and lines should be shorter. Also, under less crowded conditions it will be easier for voters to get help with the new equipment from election workers. The Senate first voted against early voting. They were worried that longer campaigns will be more expensive for candidates and will allow "electioneering." The Lt. Governor, who heads up state elections, plus several

county clerks convinced the Senate (with the exception of Senator Stephenson) to change its mind. The League lobbied for HB 15. It requires voter I.D. from those who vote early, which we usually oppose as unnecessary. However, under HAVA - the Help America Vote Act - voters who lack I.D. can still cast a provisional ballot pending verification of their eligibility.

The League opposed **SB 200 Voter Registration - Proof of Citizenship – Madsen**, which would have required proof of citizenship to register to vote. The sponsor said that 14 non-citizens voted in 2004, which could be extrapolated to a possible 5000-7000 illegal voters statewide. However a legislative audit said they were not sure even the 14 were not citizens. The figure was actually a statewide figure, not just a sample, and no one had been prosecuted.

The current voter registration form already calls for I.D. such as a driver license number, last four Social Security number digits, and place of naturalization. It requires signing an affidavit and warns of penalties for false statements. Considering these safeguards and the lack of evidence of abuse, and using information we obtained from the National and Arizona Leagues, we opposed the bill as setting up unnecessary barriers to voter registration. County clerks and the Disability Law Center also opposed it. It passed committee, but was never put to a vote of the full Senate.

What we still need to know:

- Will the growing concern over illegal immigration seriously affect citizens' right to vote?
- What's wrong with "electioneering"? The word actually has two meanings: (1) campaigning in an election--sounds good to us-- and (2) attempting to win votes by being insincere and unscrupulous--not something we want to see, but not confined to early voting we'd guess.



ETHICS Lobbyist gifts were the subject of three bills.

2nd Subst HB 94 Ban on Gifts to Elected Officials - Jones defined gifts and prohibited public officials from taking any worth more than \$5. It passed the House with only 6 no votes (Cox, Daw, Dayton, Hughes, Johnson and Wheeler). But it died in Senate Rules without a hearing.

Points made by sponsor Jones:

Gifts create distrust and apathy among constituents

People ask why we need a gift ban. Her answer: why do we need gifts?

Lobbyists are smart and know the rules. If gifts are banned, lobbyists won't offer them (which means legislators won't have to decide whether to accept them.)

SB102 Gifts to Public Officials - Bell did not propose to ban gifts but to increase disclosure of who receives what from whom. Lobbyists would have to name recipients of gifts and meals worth \$10 or more, instead of the current \$50 or more.

Sponsor Bell argued that gifts give lobbyists face time that ordinary citizens don't have. This behooves legislators to disclose them. He also said he often pays for the events he goes to. He asked why, if gifts have no effect, do lobbyists give them? And why do elected officials accept them?

But Senator Stephenson spoke emotionally against disclosure, mainly it seemed because he believes the media that he called "killer bees" use it to attack legislators, implying non-existent graft and corruption. He said disclosure would limit contact with lobbyists and that legislators shouldn't have to face empty evenings playing solitaire. (This part was a little confusing. Disclosure doesn't ban gifts or prevent contact, and legislators who pay their own way can still benefit from lobbyist contacts and information.)

SB 102 then failed 1-5 in committee with Senators Bramble, Dmitrich, Goodfellow, Peterson and Stephenson voting no.

HB 101 Lobbyist Gift Limits and Disclosure - Alexander also did not propose to ban gifts but to increased frequency of reporting by lobbyists and government officials who lobby, and to require disclosure of travel benefits from lobbyists. It lowered the threshold for reporting who receives the gift from \$50 to \$5, and set conflict of interest standards for lobbyists. (Paid lobbyists sometimes work for clients on both sides of an issue--which is considered unethical by attorneys). The bill passed the House with only Cox, Gowans, Hansen and Hendrickson voting no. But during its Senate hearing in the Revenue and Taxation Committee the bill was substituted by Stephenson to raise the reporting threshold from \$5 to \$100, although that was later returned to the current level of \$50. The committee passed it with Senators Bramble, Dmitrich, Goodfellow, Peterson and Stephenson voting in favor. Senator Bell voted no. But 3rd Subst HB 101 then died in Senate Rules.

Representative Alexander regretted the loss of good things in his bill such as more frequent reporting and conflict of interest guidelines for lobbyists. He acknowledged that the media can use disclosed gifts against legislators and that the voters don't want them to take gifts. But he thought an outright ban would be too difficult for part time legislators conducting private as well as public business.

What we still need to know:

- How can we convince legislators that voters are entitled to know what gifts their legislators receive from what sources, and that they reasonably complain that such gifts provide extra access for those who provide them?



EDUCATION FUNDING - was increased by a 6% general rise in the weighted pupil unit (WPU), but some bills

that could have funded targeted programs did not pass.

Subst HB 107 Full-day Kindergarten - Holdaway would have authorized \$7 million for voluntary full-day kindergarten and given priority to Title I, low income children. **HB 134 Class Size Reduction - Moss** would have allocated \$37 million for smaller classes, also giving preference to schools with low income children.

This year's voucher bill, **HB 184 Parent Choice in Education Act – Adams**, never came to a House vote on the last night of the session because of lack of support. This meant that Representatives did not go on record for or against vouchers this year. But the private school organization that has been pushing vouchers has promised to fund candidates to run against anti-voucher incumbents -- based evidently on past votes on the issue.

HB 181 Education Reform - Urquhart passed. It includes \$7.5 million for vouchers for private instruction to help students pass the Utah Basic Skills Competency Test needed for high school graduation. There's also \$12.5 million to improve math skills in grades 4-6; this program sets up merit pay for teachers of the students who improve. Teachers who oppose this say it discourages grouping students by skill level and team teaching. Merit pay for teachers is always tricky because student success depends on factors other than teaching, such as socio-economic status and English proficiency of students. UEA asked the governor to veto HB 181.



NUCLEAR WASTE became an issue when **SB 70 Process for Approval of Waste Disposal Amendments - Stephenson** passed both houses. It allowed the legislature to override the governor's veto of the expansion of waste storage facilities applied for after July 1, 2007. This changed the current law that requires local government, the Governor and the Legislature to agree before those expansions can occur. The League opposed this change because we thought reducing the Governor's oversight would go against our position: "Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment." We suggested that the Legislature could independently weigh in by a Joint Resolution that would stand without the governor's signature. That would allow the Legislature to have its say. But of course it wouldn't prevent the Governor from having his say as well, which seemed to be the purpose of SB 70.

SB 70 passed both houses but was vetoed by the governor just before the end of the session. On the last night, the Senate overrode the veto, but the House lacked the 2/3 vote to override and ran out of time. The veto stands. The League lobbied against the bill and encouraged the Governor to veto it.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The League opposed **HB 100 Bond for Environmental Lawsuits - Tilton**, along with two similar bills by Tilton, HB 259, and HB 335. All would require very large bonds from entities that do business in Utah when they begin environmental litigation to stay permits or delay the start-up of projects they deem harmful. If an organization does not put up the bond, it loses its right to exist in the State of Utah. Environmental and other non-profit organizations such as the League are incorporated in the state and would be affected. The bills were meant to protect the state or private interests from the cost of delays caused by environmental litigation. The construction delay and increased costs for Legacy Highway was the case in point. We opposed these bills because they restrict citizen access to their government and especially because certain kinds of people and groups must surmount greater barriers to petition government agencies and courts than do others.

Although HB 100 passed both houses (and by 2/3rds), questions about its constitutionality arose from many sources, including the Office of Legislative Research. OLR didn't find a high probability that HB 100 would be held unconstitutional but raised constitutional concerns that it would be an effective bar to judicial review, or the right to a remedy, or uniform operation of Utah laws. Other issues could be violating the supremacy of federal law over state law, including environmental laws, and violation of the First Amendment rights to association (as a corporation) and speech (litigation). One concern is that the state is charging heedlessly into expensive litigation. The governor indicated he might veto it and the League asked him to do so.

What we still need to do:

- We were disturbed by the angry standoff between protecting human health and the environment and making money and would be glad to participate in any efforts at mediation.



WATER FUNDING - (Commentary on the 2006 Legislature: Ann O'Connell, Natural Resources Chair)
The League opposed three water financing bills. Our new position on water taxation states that users should pay for water projects and infrastructure and our environmental positions support opposition to any more large water capture and diversion systems. The three bills would increase state financial support for dams and pipelines that would take more water from the Bear River/Great Salt Lake ecosystem and discourage conservation. SB 39 (Hillyard) which was intended to divert some of this and any future surplus into water projects became lost in the Senate committee system. It did not pass out of Senate Natural Resource (A tie is a defeat.); and, although the sponsor Senator Hillyard did succeed in having the Senate Rules Committee send it to Government Operations, that committee sent it back to Rules, where it stayed. It would be interesting to know more of the Senate politics involved in these maneuvers.

The two other water bills passed both chambers. HB 45 Ground Water Management Act (Adams) removed at least some of the requirement that before work could begin 70% of the water should be spoken for. HB 47 Sales Tax Diversion for Water Projects and

Financing (Ure) raises the cap on the percent of sales tax now designated for water projects. Bear River Development is a major but not the only beneficiary.

Clearly thoughtful people can, and do, disagree about water policy, especially as to whether we need more water in our urban areas. We talk about this a lot in the League. HBs 259 and 335 died in the House, no doubt when wiser heads prevailed.

The League supported HB 136 (Craig Buttars) which would have allowed Cache County to levy a sales tax for agricultural land preservation. It did not survive the House. We also lobbied for more general funds for the Division of Wildlife Resources. More General Fund money could mean that non-hunters would have more influence in wildlife management. We can claim some success here especially if you like fish hatcheries.

Representative Ure successfully sponsored a bill that will promote study of the state's aquifers. This is something the League may wish to follow. Any volunteers?

2006 Legislature "A WORK IN PROGRESS"

Utah State Women's Legislative Council - Elizabeth Hindley, Poet Laureate

Although the Governor tried to get them on a NASCAR Speed Race,
They still proceeded at their very own pace.

They didn't start until the end, which means a special session,
They always seem to manage this-it is their main obsession.

Political rhetoric and posturing were truly at their peak;
And grandiose persuasion was quite obvious, so to speak.

The budget hearings had all their usual ups and downs,
With many opinions uttered amongst assorted smiles and frowns.

The most liked was "let's build more roads and bridges,
We promise to leave space for wild life way up on the ridges.

We can be sure, no matter what else happened, it won't be
returned to its source.
And so we agreed--spend it on education, of course.

Yes, HB 181 gives them over a million, but with many caveats.
Higher Ed got its usual mere pittance, some monies, but not lots.

No all day kindergarten, no smaller class-room size.
At least teacher's salaries won an upward prize.

A Hate-Crimes Bill finally was agreed upon after much debate.
It took eight years to come together and settle on a date.

They tried to seize powers from the governorship without regard
to reason.
They soon backed down when they realized it wouldn't work this
session.

The biggest "noise" occurred over not letting our schools teach
evolution.

We are glad it didn't pass because it would have caused a
"People's Revolution."

Over this, debate-with opinions clashing, it sounded just like
freedom ringing!
Let more voices be heard-this is democracy flourishing!

Leggies office e-mails are now open to the public, for sure.
We ask: "Why were they so against this if their motives are so
pure?"

Nothing new for females-parental permission for abortion-no
preventive pills for pregnancy-still-
We ask, "Which came first-the chicken or the egg? We say the
egg-so let's have the PILL"

Maybe we should just ban using tobacco instead of listing
places in which one cannot smoke.
Or maybe, just ban "pro-tobacco lobbyists" – this is getting to be
a joke.

Small wonder the lobbyist's disclosure and the ethics bill didn't
pass again this year,
When it's time for the electorate to speak at the polls –SPEAK
LOUDLY –without fear.

If our democracy is to be strong, it must have criticism
If our government is to function it must have in-put even
cynicism.

The "Ship of State" needs a legislature for guidance, but a poor
one can be elected when good people fail to vote.
Remember: it is the responsibility and duty of the people to
keep that boat afloat.

So Vote,
Vote,
Vote!

LWVUS President Kay Maxwell points out in this VOTER that partisan redistricting, or gerrymandering, is an issue that goes to the heart of the democratic system. After each 10 year census, the new population figures and their distribution are used by Congress to reapportion the 435 members of the House among the 50 states. Then each state does the same to adjust the boundaries of its Congressional (and legislative, etc) districts. The lines must be drawn so that the same number of voters are in each district, the one person-one vote principle.

The problem is that in many states this process is controlled by whichever party happens to be in the majority—usually through the legislature. This has led to a situation where upwards of 90 percent of the seats in Congress are safe seats for incumbents because their districts are drawn to guarantee that. New computer software and mapping makes this quite easy to do, especially if no guidelines other than population (such as local government boundaries, minority representation, or communities of interest) are used. This amounts to representatives choosing who will vote for them, instead of voters choosing their representatives, and it undermines the two- or multi-party system. This is not a problem if you believe the majority is always right and should have all the power in perpetuity. That of course does not describe democracy.

One way some states counteract majority domination is through bi-partisan or non-partisan citizen commissions. Although it's probably impossible for a commission to be completely non-partisan, it's usually less partisan than a legislative body, especially one in which one party has a heavy majority. A bi-partisan commission is part of the Utah League's position, based on our 1980 study, and several Utah legislators have proposed this solution. Since their bills have not passed, Representative Roz McGee tried a different approach to making the process less partisan this year. She proposed a bill (HB 91) to require any redistricting plan to be adopted by at least a two-thirds vote of the Legislature. The House Government Operations Committee, made up of 8 Republicans and 3 Democrats, voted the bill down 4-7, with one Republican Representative Hutchings voting in favor. It's not easy to share power.

A bill currently before Congress would require every state to conduct its redistricting once every 10 years through an independent commission (HR 2642 Fairness and Independence in Redistricting Act, sponsored by John Tanner (D-Tennessee)). This would apply only to Congressional redistricting, not legislative.

Reapportionment has come up in connection with another League priority: giving residents of the District of Columbia the right to vote for a Representative in the U.S. House. Under the DC FAIR Act, H.R. 2043 by Tom Davis (R VA), D.C. voters would get that right and Utah would get a 4th seat in Congress. The extra seat for Utah, which it's assumed would go to a Republican, is meant to balance the D.C. seat that it's assumed would go to a Democrat. However, there seems to be a Constitutional problem in that the 4th Utah seat would be at large, not in a 4th district (because the Constitution says you can only redistrict once every 10 years). That means that each Utahn would have 1 and 1/3 representatives, not one person-one vote as compared with the rest of the country. Another bill before Congress would avoid that by simply adding one Representative for D.C., but as we said that seat would go likely go to a Democrat, so Republicans oppose it.

A conference on this knotty problem of redistricting will be held at the University of Utah April 3-5. Our national President-Elect Mary Wilson will be part of it, and we hope our legislators will be as well.

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AT RISK: AGENDA FOR RENEWAL AND REPAIR
Hinckley Institute of Politics, University of Utah
February 1, 2006
Kay Maxwell, President, LWVUS

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. First let me say how pleased I am to be here and how much I appreciate the invitation to speak with you.

I want to share with you the concerns that we in the League of Women Voters have about the basic mechanisms of our government -- why we believe that American democracy is at risk and what we believe must be done to put our country on the right track.

HISTORY OF LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League comes naturally to the task of protecting and enhancing our democracy. As most of you know, the League was founded in 1920 as an outgrowth of the women's suffrage movement, just six months before women finally won the right to vote. It began as an



experiment designed to help 20 million newly-enfranchised women carry out their responsibilities as voters and encourage them to use their new power to participate in shaping public policy.

From the beginning, the League has been an activist, grassroots organization that believed that citizens should be active and informed participants in their communities.

The League is a nonpartisan, but political, organization. We are nonpartisan in that we never support or oppose a particular political party or candidate or appointee. Because of that, we are trusted as an unbiased representative of citizens' views and concerns. We provide nonpartisan information at election time that includes candidates' positions on issues, and by sponsoring political debates and issue forums.

We do take stands on issues, though, and we lobby government at all levels for change. We study issues, arrive at public policy positions and then take action. Over the years, at the national level we've lobbied on issues as wide ranging as health care reform, the United Nations, clean water and clean air, Social Security, and voter registration reform, just to name a few. The League has stood firm on issues because we felt we were right – although our positions haven't always been popular.

The League has always been a voice for citizens and a force for change. Because the League is a grassroots organization, members focus on different issues from state to state and community to community. But in one way or another, the League at every level is always engaged in trying to improve the American system of governance and engage its people.

DEMOCRACY AGENDA

Years of band-aid solutions and neglect have allowed many of our government systems to grow weak. Our Democracy Agenda offers viable solutions to help overcome those weaknesses, and educate communities and citizens nationwide, on how to improve things. This effort is about protecting our electoral processes through election reform efforts and reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act; advancing our representative government through nonpartisan redistricting; preserving our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties; and protecting against government corruption through campaign finance and lobbying reform.

Democracy is at risk when long lines and faulty voting processes keep Americans from voting and having their votes counted. Democracy is at risk when partisan gerrymandering ensures that elections are over before the people vote. Democracy is at risk when government actions threaten basic civil liberties. And, democracy is at risk when special interest money plays a dominant role. We believe we must renew and repair our democracy so that it truly works for all citizens.

Election Reform

The first item on our Democracy Agenda is election reform.

The 2000 election exposed major flaws in our election system. Those flaws had been there for a while, but they were only

exposed because of that very close election. This sparked an outpouring of concern, and Congress finally acted by passing a bi-partisan, compromise bill -- the Help America Vote Act, better known as HAVA. Its goal was, and is, to make sure that all voters can participate in elections and that all votes of eligible voters are counted.

HAVA has not yet been fully implemented, and even after it is, there will still be major issues. While we avoided another meltdown in 2004, that was because the margin of victory seemingly exceeded the margin of error. But there were still significant problems. Had the election been only 20-30,000 votes closer in Ohio, we would have seen another constitutional crisis.

Years of inattention and complacency have given us an election management system that is not up to the task. According to the Election Center, there are 7,000 different jurisdictions in this country responsible for overseeing 200,000 polling sites. The job of managing this system falls to 18,000 paid elections staff and 1.4 million poll workers, most of whom receive just two to three hours of training - if that. Poll workers and election officials in this country do a remarkable and vitally important job. But the system is failing them just as it is failing the voters.

We in the League have identified four steps that need to be taken to improve the administration of our elections:

The **first step** we recommend is professionalization of election administration. Why were long lines such a problem in 2004? Why did many people have to wait four, five, six, even 10 hours to vote? Well, in some places the problems were as basic as workers being unable to quickly find voters' names on alphabetical lists. In others, voting machines were there, but not turned on. In still others, there just weren't enough machines or workers.

Election administration is not rocket science. It's basic management. Poll workers and election officials around the country are dedicated, competent and committed. The problem is that we are putting them out there on Election Day without the resources, the training or the equipment they need. ***We need to make sure that everyone, from the volunteer poll worker to the chief election official in the state, can make a positive contribution. We need to rethink how we recruit and train poll workers, and we need to redesign the polling place.***

The **second step** needed is to put the "service" back in "voter service." How long would a fast food chain survive if its workers regularly allowed long lines to form without opening up more registers? How long would it survive if employees didn't help customers who had questions or who had problems navigating the system?

This is how the American election system works today for far too many voters. Somewhere along the line, we forgot that government has a responsibility to help voters, that voting should not be an inconvenience for people, and that the voter – the customer – should come first.

This is a problem that starts long before Election Day. We need a voter registration system that provides for orderly administration and assures the integrity of the vote. But we also need a registration system that ensures access and convenience for everyone who is eligible.

Third, we need to launch a wide-ranging research and development effort to apply 21st Century systems and technologies to the election process. The redesign of polling place operations to accommodate modern technology would clearly benefit from additional research and development. The process of change in election management is ongoing, and continued research and development must be part of that process.

Fourth, and finally, we need a substantial and sustained investment on the part of the federal government. We need to get real about the resources that are required to run elections in a way that is consistent with this nation's democratic ideals. You get what you pay for. And right now, we are paying the price for our miserly approach to the administration of elections. And it is a price measured not in dollars, but in Americans' declining faith that the system will serve their interests fairly and efficiently.

What is the League doing to improve our election systems; what are we doing to fight against the new threats?

In Ohio, the League of Women Voters has filed a lawsuit alleging that the current Secretary of State, the Governor and their predecessors failed to ensure and protect the right to vote. The lawsuit is not based on one election, but rather on problems over three decades that relate to voter registration, training of poll workers and allocation of voting machines. In Georgia, the League has been active in the legislature and has joined with other concerned organizations in suing to overturn restrictions on voter participation. And, at the national level, we have an exciting new project to assist Leagues in state-based advocacy to prevent the disenfranchisement of eligible citizens, particularly underserved populations. Selected state Leagues will receive substantial funds to assist their voter protection efforts, and we will be able to provide additional assistance to Leagues on voter protection issues.

The League, as part of a team led by the International Foundation for Election Systems and the Poll Worker Institute, is also helping to create a poll worker manual under a grant from the Election Assistance Commission. This "how to" manual will be based on a review of existing resources on poll worker recruitment and training, results of focus groups and lessons learned. While we'll be assisting in all aspects of the project, the League's specific focus will be on the design and implementation of the focus groups.

Another important election reform issue is the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. Key sections of the Voting Rights Act expire in 2007 and coalition efforts have already begun to secure reauthorization. Section 5 requires certain jurisdictions with a history of racially discriminatory practices to "pre-clear" with the Department of Justice any changes to their election systems to ensure that such changes don't abridge the right to vote. Section 203 requires jurisdictions

with significant minority language populations to provide ballots and voting material in those languages.

The Voting Rights Act has institutionalized the principles that outlaw discrimination in elections and protect the rights of minority voters. Unfortunately, some minority voters still face obstacles to voting, whether from attempts to dilute the strength of minority voters in unfair redistricting, or from an election official harassing a minority voter, or from the lack of bilingual ballots for citizens who have limited English proficiency – the contemporary equivalent of the last century's literacy test. We must reauthorize Sections 5 and 203 to continue to provide a strong deterrent to voting rights violations.

Congress has begun the reauthorization process, with extensive hearings in the House Judiciary Committee. Citizen hearings have also been held around the country. This year, we need to push ahead with legislation. Every member of Congress needs to hear that their constituents support reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. It is time to renew our commitment to protecting the right of every citizen to vote. Leagues and League members throughout the country are engaging citizens and raising awareness about the importance of the Voting Rights Act.

Redistricting

Another issue that goes to the heart of the democratic system is the controversy over partisan redistricting, or gerrymandering. This controversy is as old as the Republic. You may know that the term gerrymander itself comes from Governor Gerry of Massachusetts, who created an election district so long and misshapen that it looked like a salamander – hence the name Gerry – mander. Today, with the advent of modern computers and growing partisanship, it is possible to create legislative districts where the results of an election will be known before any votes are cast or counted. This is just what is happening across the nation. And it threatens our democracy.

In some states, incumbents of both parties get together to protect themselves from real elections. In other states, one party or another draws the districts so they will have many more seats than they would be entitled to if fair lines were drawn. In either case, the people are locked out. Decisions are not made by the electorate, but by politicians manipulating the electorate.

It is time to do something about this trend. It is time to stop partisan redistricting and develop mechanisms in the states to ensure fair results, so that elections determine the shape of our legislatures.

The underlying theme for redistricting is the same as the underlying theme for the League's work on election reform and other Democracy Agenda issues: Voters should determine who represents them. A representative government demands fair processes that allow each voter's voice to be heard, unencumbered by faulty mechanisms,

unfair procedures, special interests or government interference.

To that end, the League espouses **four basic redistricting principles** for protecting the integrity of the electoral process. First, we support the bedrock constitutional guarantee of “one person, one vote.” Second, the redistricting process should promote full political participation by minority voters. Third, the redistricting process should be transparent and open to public participation. Finally, we oppose partisan gerrymandering because it subverts our democratic system. **Representative democracy depends on the voters freely choosing their representatives rather than politicians choosing their voters.**

Redistricting reform will be a long battle. We need to reform the processes of redistricting and we need to ensure that fair redistricting plans are adopted after the 2010 census. We need nonpartisan reforms, such as independent redistricting commissions and requirements to keep communities together, and we need a political movement to achieve those nonpartisan reforms.

We will have many opportunities in many states to get the job done. Already, state Leagues in California, Ohio and Florida are in the forefront of reform efforts, as are a number of other state Leagues. At the national level, we are working with other concerned organizations to bring attention to the importance of reform efforts and to promote nonpartisan redistricting. I recently had the opportunity to join with our allies in a press conference on Capitol Hill and the LWVUS is cosponsoring a national conference on redistricting this April.

In addition, we recently had an opportunity to take the League’s case on redistricting to the Supreme Court. As you know, the Court is hearing a challenge to the partisan gerrymander imposed on the citizens of Texas in 2003. Joined by the League of Women Voters of Texas, which fought the plan when it was first presented, the LWVUS submitted a “friend of the court” brief arguing that the Texas legislature’s mid-census redistricting was unconstitutional because it was carried out solely to achieve partisan advantage. The Court will hear arguments in the case on March 1st.

By filing this brief the League of Women Voters continues its long history of defending against attacks on the basic right to fair and equal representation guaranteed by the Constitution. Leagues across the country have worked hard to secure representative redistricting plans in their states after each census, and are seeking reforms to assure that the process is nonpartisan, equitable and open. These are core rights for citizens of a free and democratic nation.

Civil Liberties

A third focus of the League’s democracy agenda involves the basic civil liberties that under gird our entire system of representative democracy. The right to speak freely, to assemble freely, to read and debate freely on all subjects is the prerequisite for a vibrant democracy. When the government can investigate what books you read or take out of the library, when

the government can carry out secret wiretapping without court approval, when the government monitors the meetings of citizens who speak out against government policy, and when the Executive Branch asserts the inherent right to disregard both international and domestic laws, then basic civil liberties have been called into question.

Many of the key provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act undermine civil liberties, including the “sneak and peek” warrants that allow the government to search your home or business without notifying you or without a search warrant ahead of time. Protecting against terrorism is important, but so too is protecting against the possibility of government intimidation.

The League has been active in seeking changes to the USA PATRIOT Act to bring it more in line with basic civil liberties. Just this past December, we had a victory in this tough fight when a number of courageous senators, from both sides of the aisle, acted to block the reauthorization of that Act.

Unfortunately, the debate over civil liberties has become even more crucial with the revelations that wiretaps of American citizens have been carried out without prior court authorization. A member of the special court that hears requests for warrants in terrorism cases, a federal judge, has resigned in protest, and Congress promises hearings. More will be heard on these issues of domestic surveillance.

This past year, the League also spoke out against torture and supported the inclusion of the McCain amendment in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill. That amendment bars the use of torture in interrogations and the cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of detainees. It is shocking to me, as I’m sure it is to you, that we would have to speak out against the violation of basic human rights and international law by our own government, but that is where we are. The United States must recommit itself to following human rights standards in order to regain standing internationally and to ensure that our nation remains true to the values of our democratic system.

Citizen understanding and support is critical to putting our country back on track. In an effort to educate the public, the League launched an eight-month initiative last year to foster public dialogue about the balance between civil liberties and homeland security called “Local Voices: Citizen Conversations on Civil Liberties and Secure Communities.” We developed materials, and Leagues led citizen forums in ten cities across the country. A final report was issued last September and sent to the President, members of Congress, governors of the states, and other interested parties. I should emphasize that any League can sponsor a forum on civil liberties using the materials that we prepared and that are available on the League’s web site, lww.org.

Another effort in the civil liberties area is our “Openness in Government: Looking for the Sunshine” project. The goal is to help communities better understand the importance of – and threats to – open and accountable

government. Materials about federal, state and local laws concerning citizen access, contacts with other state organizations working in this area, and data on the increasing levels of information being put off-limits since 9/11 will be available on the League's web site in February, and we hope to have copies mailed to Leagues by the end of February. "Safeguarding the US Democracy: Promoting an Independent Judiciary by Defending the US Constitution," is a public education effort to increase understanding of our nation's system of checks and balances, the separation of powers and the importance of a strong third branch of government.

Activities under this project will go beyond providing information about judicial candidates and how they are selected. They will cover such topics as the role that judges play in interpreting the law; the rights of citizens that are jeopardized by a weakened judiciary system; the differences between the roles played by state and federal courts; and the role of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The time has come for a broader, national understanding about how important it is to the integrity of our American Democracy that we preserve the independence of the courts and judges. This effort builds on the League's role in promoting an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive. Over the course of *Safeguarding U.S. Democracy*, we hope to build an informed citizenry that is prepared to defend the merits of the system of separation of powers, the need for checks and balances, and the importance of a strong third branch of government.

Campaign Finance and Lobbying Reform

The fourth and final item on our Democracy Agenda concerns the role of money and special interests in American politics. We know that "he who pays the piper calls the tune." That's why campaign finance and lobbying reform are so important to protecting our democracy. When special interests are the dominant source of campaign funding, when special interests have special access to Congress, indeed when special interest lobbyists can call the tune on Capitol Hill, then it is time for fundamental reform.

Citizens are deeply concerned about the growing issues of corruption and ethics abuses in politics. Americans do not want to give wealth and special interests more access to power. American citizens, in fact, want more reform, not a retreat from anti-corruption safeguards.

The League recently joined with other public interest groups to call on Congress to enact new safeguards against abuses in the lobbying process. Congressional travel -- golf trips and foreign vacations -- should not be funded by special interests. We need new enforcement mechanisms to guard against congressional abuses. And, perhaps most importantly, we must attack a fundamental issue -- campaign funding. We need to ensure that lobbyists cannot deliver huge sums of campaign cash to the very members of Congress they are lobbying. We need to reform our campaign financing systems.

The League has been involved in campaign finance reform efforts for years and worked hard for the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, better known as McCain-Feingold, which closed the most significant "soft money" and "sham issue" loopholes. We also filed a friend of the court brief with the Supreme Court when the law was challenged.

But much, much more needs to be done! We need public financing of congressional elections, and we need to renew the presidential public financing system.

The election of a President of the United States is the single most important election in our country, and perhaps the world. The election obviously results in the selection of this powerful official. But it also affects every voter's perception about our election system generally, and about how our government really works. The presidential election system sets the tone for American democracy.

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the public financing system for presidential elections, enacted in the 1970s, played a key role in rescuing the presidency from the dark days of Watergate, when many citizens believed that our political system was corrupt at its core.

We have seen the presidential public financing system wither away, as needed updates and improvements have not been put in place. In 2004, three major candidates, including the two party's nominees, did not participate in public funding. This system needs to be fixed, and fixed soon. We continue to work with Representatives Shays and Meehan, and Senators McCain and Feingold on legislation that will fix the presidential public financing system with the kind of reforms that will bring it up to date.

But we also face ongoing threats in Congress. Several times in the past year we have had to mobilize to fight against attempts to undermine campaign finance laws. Incredibly, some members have sought to INCREASE the size of special interest contributions to candidates or to create new loopholes. We have succeeded thus far, and we want to thank all those League members who have responded to action alerts on this issue, as well as our other key issues.

There are some promising signs on campaign finance reform at the grassroots level. In fact, in Connecticut -- my home state -- the Democratic controlled General Assembly recently passed landmark campaign finance legislation. It includes public financing of state legislative campaigns, as well as for our statewide constitutional offices, and made Connecticut the first state in the country to have its legislature enact public financing. And the Republican Governor signed it into law.

Americans have said time and time again that special interest groups have too much influence over Washington. They want the average citizen to have just as much say in who becomes President as large corporations, lobbying organizations and wealthy donors. Our system belongs in the hands of its rightful owners -- the American voters -- and the

League will continue to do its part, both at the grassroots level and nationally, to see that it happens.

CONCLUSION

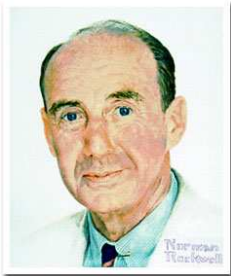
The League's Democracy Agenda -- election reform and reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act; nonpartisan redistricting; safeguarding civil liberties; and campaign finance and lobbying reform -- is also a citizen's agenda. Neither the League nor any other organization can accomplish change without the involvement of citizens; and that means each and every one of you.

Citizen involvement is the key to making democracy work. And, non-partisan action is essential if we're going to reduce polarization, have real dialogues on issues and get something done. Citizens across the country must get involved.

For those of you who are not yet members of the League of Women Voters, I ask you to join us. For those of you who are members, please redouble your efforts for the values we share.

Thomas Jefferson once observed that it is the responsibility of each generation to give new definition to American democracy. For those of us who believe that the active and informed participation of citizens is essential to our government, for those of us who work every day to engage our communities and the nation in the critical issues of the day, America is at a crossroads. We need every concerned citizen to join with us in protecting our representative system of government, and we need every concerned citizen to reach out and encourage others to participate in our cause.

Taken from a speech Adlai Stephenson gave in 1952:



“The tragedy of our day is the climate of fear in which we live and fear breeds repression. Too often sinister threats to the bill of rights, to freedom of the mind, are concealed under the cloak of anti-communism.

It is often easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them.”

Today it is the cloak of anti-terrorism.

LOCAL LEAGUE UPDATES

League of Women Voters of Cache County

In January, the Logan League met with their legislators. This has been an annual event in Logan. League members along with about 40 guests attended a brunch where they had the opportunity to hear from what their legislators hoped would happen during the session and also were available for questions and answers from the audience.

They are in the process of planning a demonstration of the voting machines with the County Clerks. This was a very successful activity they did last summer at the Fair. They are concerned that voters aren't going to be able to get the same type of private tutorial as they did at the fair and that many of the inexperienced computer voters might fail to vote. The Logan League is hoping to work with the County Clerks office to be available to do some training.



Their annual meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2006.

Tom Proffitt, President

League of Women Voters of Cedar City

The Cedar City League met and discussed the priorities we felt were important for the legislature. We are in the process of firming a date for a meeting with legislators from our area.

Barbara Prestwich



League of Women Voters of Davis County

We had a general meeting with Roger Ball, the past director of The Committee for Consumer Service. He spoke about the escalating cost of fuel and the changing voice of the Utah consumer.

Nancy Cooper

League of Women Voters of Grand County

The Moab League had a social at the end of February, a book exchange, with very good attendance. They are planning their annual meeting for April.

League of Women Voters of Salt Lake

January - Kathy Dorn and her faithful lobby corps worked hard through all three months to keep us informed and the legislators on their toes, and wore their little legs and other body parts to the bone! The legislative updates were given each weekday morning on KCPW and KPCW by Nancy Melling, Marelynn Zipser and Joyce Barnes -- but the writing and analysis was always done by Sandy, usually about midnight each night.

In February we read and discussed the Health Care report by Pat Nielson and her committee.

In March we teamed with The City Library to celebrate Sunshine Week 2006. The response has been gratifying and I hope this can expand beyond a week to one of our ongoing goals. The NPR live feed was viewed on March 13 by about 15 people. The video was shown again March 17, followed by a panel discussion. Panelists were: Ken Verdoia, KUED, Jonathan Brown, KCPW, Karen Shepherd, former member of Congress, 2nd district of Utah, Linda Peterson, editor of the South Valley Journal and President of the Utah Society of Professional Journalists.

We had our annual legislative wrapup on March 11 and it was well attended. Successes and failures were discussed as well as on-going efforts to get certain bills vetoed by the Governor

Joyce Barnes, co-president

League of Women Voters of Utah County

The Provo league has not met since last fall. Most of the active members have gotten involved in their respective political parties. However, they are planning to call a meeting for the first part of April to put together a public forum.

Mary Lou Huffman



League of Women Voters of Weber County: www.weberleague.org



Marie Irvine has posted the votes of all Weber County state legislators on our web site on issues of interest to our members. Although the session is over the voting records will remain on the web site along with the records from the 2005 session at least until this fall's election. We found it was useful to post some committee votes on bills (such as the redistricting vote), which didn't make it to the floor.

In February we had two knowledgeable people give us both sides of the Bear River Development Act: Tage Flint, the director of the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District and Erin Neyrey of the Utah Rivers Council. The differences in their opinions on the need for a new storage reservoir on the Bear River revolve to a great extent of the effectiveness of conservation. Although, the act has passed we can continue to follow the planning effort.

In March, members got together and discussed the RDA Study. It gave us a chance to figure out how Ogden got to where it is now and what might happen in the future. With construction proceeding on the mall and controversy over the new city council's actions on the Ogden River Project, the actions of the RDA are constantly in the news.

Socializing and a chance for good Greek food should bring members out for our annual meeting on April 10. We might even discuss what we plan to do next year, pass a budget and elect some officers.

Marilyn O'Dell

MEMORIAL FUND

The Memorial Fund, a joint savings account for both the State and the Salt Lake Leagues, has \$5000.00, which is used for office supplies and/or equipment. Stuart Gygi, the Salt Lake League Treasurer, is the chair. In addition both Salt Lake and State have two representatives. The Memorial Fund Committee meets whenever the office has a need for equipment. For example, the last purchase was two years ago. The fund purchased our current copy/fax/scan/printer.

This fund is available for contributions from members or non-members in memory of League members who have passed away.

The League of Women Voters of Utah would like to thank:
Xmission for their internet services (lwvut@mail.xmission.com)
BandCon for their web-hosting (www.lwvutah.com)

We would like to the following for their generous contributions to the league:

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Kathleen Hall
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Mimi Levitt
Barbara Lewis
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Evelyn Richards
Mary Sanderson
Reva Servoss
Alice Steiner
Georgia Beth Thompson
Sharon Walkington
Nancy Young
Betty Yanowitz
Corinne Wunderli

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Support the League of Women Voters to strengthen our democracy

Join the **League of Women Voters of Utah**, a respected, national grassroots organization that acts on important issues that affect you, your community and our nation. You can make a difference on the issues! Membership forms are available on line at <http://www.lwvutah.org/form.html>

We are –

- *Empowering millions of voters to protect their right to vote*
- *Working to ensure that ALL votes are counted and all voices are heard*
- *Preserving our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties*
- *Acting as a force for positive change in our communities and in our democracy*

We believe that sensible, responsible, civil discourse and action based on substance, rather than partisan battles is essential if we are to avoid polarization and get something done. We believe that American democracy is at risk and that now is the time to act.

Donate to the league. Your tax-deductible contribution will provide important support for advancing our critical work to safeguard the vote. Contribute today!



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