



The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CLEVELAND AREA

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Serving the cities of Berea, Bratenahl, Brook Park, Cleveland, Euclid, Independence, Middleburg Heights, Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township, and Strongsville

MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a member.

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New Study: Ethics in Government

by Roslyn Talerico, Vice President LWV Cleveland Area

Suppose you are a trustee of one of Cuyahoga County's special districts and your agency supports the passage of certain Council legislation. You call to meet with your councilperson and s/he suggests meeting for lunch. Who takes the check – you, the official, or does one of you request separate checks? Or – Suppose the County is planning a large construction project and is selecting the architect. Your firm is interested in bidding but is aware that competing firms are providing gifts to the legislators to encourage support. You don't believe this is appropriate, but will your firm be considered without a gift (bribe)? What should you do?

The League was requested in 2010 to form a transition workgroup to develop a code of ethics for our new County government. After many meetings, we did write a code of which much, but not all, has now been adopted by the County. In 2012 we want to be able to weigh in on the first opportunity to make changes to the charter, but we need new League positions to speak as the League rather than only as individuals.

A Code of Ethics is a blueprint for building an ethical culture in the County, through establishing new routines and developing new habits. Education and training must be required for all employees and officers of the County's departments and agencies so that they can apply the code to their work. Transparency will be enhanced if information is posted on one web link, easily searched and cross-referenced. Enhanced whistleblower rights, responsibilities and protections will empower employees and ensure their security when they act as watchdogs for ethical practices. What is an ideal ethics enforcement entity? Somebody must mind the store. How can the entity be kept independent? How can its funding be kept independent?

Some of these and more are addressed by the new Charter, Ethics Ordinance and Inspector General Ordinance, but some are not. Some will be addressed by next year's 2012-13 Charter Review process. The County's new ethical culture is still a work in progress. We will need to agree on positions in the coming League year so that we and our "sister Leagues" can act when the moment is ripe. Cleveland members will be leading the way.

Learn more about this timely issue:

Come to the Ethics in Government information and discussion meeting, November 19, 10:15 AM at the Fulton Branch, Cleveland Public Library, 3545 Fulton Rd., Cleveland 44109.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Leaguers,

The Ohio Legislature has been busy this year making changes to election laws. Some of these changes will make it harder for voters here to vote absentee and/or vote early. Unlike the past few years, the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections is no longer able to mail all registered voters an application for an absentee ballot and a postage-paid return envelope. Nor can they include return postage on the envelope to return your ballot.

If you want to vote absentee, you will need to contact the Board of Elections (BOE) by phone (216.443.3298), by mail (CC BOE, 2929 Euclid Ave, Cleveland 44115) or online (www.boe.cuyahogacounty.us) to apply for an absentee ballot. If you wish to return the ballot by mail you must affix the correct amount of postage, which will probably be more than one \$.44 stamp. If you wish to vote early, you will not be able to do so at the Board of Elections on the weekend.

LWV Cleveland Area, other areas leagues, and voter registration drives will try to get this message out to voters in Cuyahoga County. You can help by making sure your friends, neighbors and relatives know about the changes. Because so many people (49% in the last election) voted before the election, the Board of Elections has reduced the number of precincts in order to save money on poll workers. If people do not know about the changes and try to vote on Election Day, they may encounter longer lines and waits.

If you prefer to vote on Election Day, make sure that you know where to vote. Many polling places have changed. You should receive a post card from the BOE that identifies your polling place, so make sure that you save the card or at least the information. If you do NOT receive a postcard, contact the BOE before the election (by phone or online) to verify where you should go to vote. Under the new law, poll workers will not be able to help you find the correct place to vote. You can vote with a provisional ballot, but if you are in the wrong precinct your vote for locality will not be counted. You can also verify that you are registered online or by phone. If you have moved since you last voted, you must file a change-of-address.

Confused? Contact the Voter Information Hotline at 216.781.8376.

Want to know about election issues and the new laws? All members are invited to the Northeast Ohio Regional Meeting sponsored by LWV Ohio on Sat August 20, 10 a.m. to noon at Hudson Library, 98 Library St, Hudson OH 44236. You can meet League members from all over Northeast Ohio, ask questions, share suggestions and opinions.

Hope to see many of you at the LWV picnic celebrating Women's Equality Day on Friday, August 26, 4 to 8 p.m.

In League,
Penny Jeffrey

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2011-2012

(For more info, call the office at 216-781-8375)

Friday, August 26: LWVC potluck picnic and celebration of Women's Equality Day, 4-8 p.m. at the Beach House/Party Room, 22500 Lake Road, Rocky River 44116. Directions from I-90 E and W: Take I-90 to Clague Rd., turn north on Clague, turn right onto Lake (US 6); Beach House is on the left. Please bring an item for the white elephant raffle. RSVP to the League office 781-8375 or email sherecegray@lwvcef.org.

Tuesday, September 6: LWVC membership meeting on "Townships and Municipalities: How Are They Different?" with Sherri Lippus, Olmsted Township Trustee, at 3 p.m. at the Renaissance, 26375 John Road, Olmsted Township. For more details and directions, see article on page 3.

Tuesday, September 13: Municipal Primary in the cities of Brook Park and Middleburg Heights

Saturday, September 17: Constitution Day

Saturday, September 24: "Moving Planet: A Global Day of Climate Action" to call attention to the need to get off fossil fuels and move towards a sustainable, renewably powered future. See the LWVUS web site for more details.

Tuesday, October 11: Deadline for voter registration

Saturday, November 5: Deadline for absentee ballot application

Tuesday, November 8: GENERAL ELECTION for candidates for Boards of Education, state issues and local options. Please vote and encourage others to do so.

Saturday, November 19: LWVC informational meeting on our Ethics Study, 10:15 a.m. at the Fulton Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, 3545 Fulton Road 44109. For more info., contact Roslyn Talerico (440-235-0692).

Saturday, December 10: LWVC holiday luncheon. Time and place TBA.

Thursday, December 15: Bill of Rights Day

PLAN AHEAD

Saturday, January 28, 2012: Consensus meeting on League's Ethics Study, 10:15 a.m. Place TBA.

Saturday, May 5, 2012: Annual meeting.

More League News.....

"Townships and Municipalities: How Are They Different?"

Explore the differences with Sherri Lippus, Olmsted Township Trustee, on Tuesday, September 6 at 3 p.m. at the Renaissance, 26376 John Road, Olmsted Township.

There are only two townships remaining in Cuyahoga County--Olmsted Township and Chagrin Falls Township. Their governments are different from that of other municipalities in the county. Join us to learn about these differences in order to be informed and active citizens and League members. If you have any questions, please call Germaine Hahnel (440-235-2243) or Roslyn Talerico (440-235-0692).

Directions: Traveling west, take I-480 West to Exit 6A, Olmsted Falls (Route 252 South). Turn right onto John Road, The Renaissance entrance is on the right. Traveling east, take I-480 East to Exit 6 (Great Northern Blvd. South), turn right onto John Road. The entrance is on the right.

How to apply for a seat on local Board or Commission

Go to or copy this link: <http://executive.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Boards-Commissions-List.aspx>

If that does not work, go to www.cuyahogacounty.us, click on Executive's Corner, Executive Home Page, Employment Opportunities, Board and Commission Opportunities. The Boards with vacancies are indicated with an asterisk(*).

Help make democracy work for our community.

Transparency Action Plan Summit

by Sherece Gray, Outreach Coordinator

The Cleveland Coalition hosted a summit on transparency in government. The goal of the summit was to bring citizens, community leaders and government officials together to develop a plan for making county government open and accessible for residents.

Breakout sessions were attended by all participants including Cuyahoga County employees and elected and appointed officials. Each session focused on a different aspect of open government practices. The sessions were facilitated by different organization staff, county employees and Cleveland Coalition members.

Beth Sebian, Cleveland Coalition Project Lead, concluded the summit by inviting participants to attend a follow-up meeting to determine how the summit outcomes should be presented to government officials and the public.

HELP WANTED!

Are you an E-Bay expert? We need to get rid of some old equipment and could make use of your skills. If you could assist, please contact the office at 216-781-8375.

LWV-OHIO: 2011 Redistricting Competition Launched

The public is being invited to draw maps for Ohio's congressional and state legislative districts and demonstrate that an open, objective, fair and nonpartisan redistricting process is possible, challenging state legislators to do the same. LWV Ohio Education Fund is sponsoring the competition along with a coalition of 25 other Ohio groups, hoping to engage the public on this important reform topic. The "Plain Dealer" recently ran a front-page Forum article declaring its intent to support this effort.

Participants use the same software and population and voting data as public officials will use to draw the maps. Go online to drawthelineohio.org; state legislative maps are due August 21 and congressional maps are due September 11.

According to the Plain Dealer, \$5,000 in prize money will be awarded, ranging from \$250-\$750 in categories including state legislative plans, congressional plans, student scholarships and policy suggestions.

LWVUS:**LWVUS CONGRATULATES THE LWV -OHIO**

After passing sweeping election reform legislation, the Ohio state legislature was back at work tweaking the law one last time before adjournment. The good news is the Ohio legislature left for summer recess WITHOUT passing a voter photo identification law. They've also canceled plans for an online system for voters to register and update their registration information, and eliminated the new requirement that a voter using a Social Security number for identification purposes provide all nine digits rather than the last four.

LWVUS STUDIES: EDUCATION AND PRIVATIZATION

Education Study: The LWVUS Board approved the consensus questions for the study of "The Role of the Federal Government in Education." Supporting research information is now available on the LWVUS web site, including "Funding and Equity Issues," "Common Core Standards and Assessments" , "Early Childhood Education, Equity and Funding," and "Legislation and Funding for the Education of Children Who Are at Risk." Local Leagues have until November 30, 2011 to complete consensus and submit final results.

Scope of the Privatization Study: The LWVUS board approved the following: "The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability and preservation of the common good." The Study Committee will be developing resource materials and preparing consensus questions to be available in late fall 2011. Local Leagues will have from then until early spring 2012 to complete their study and take consensus.

Has There Been a Money Explosion in Judicial Elections?

(from the LWV-Ohio Education Fund imPACT newsletter)

According to the authors of a fall 2010 report titled "The New Politics of Judicial Elections," there has been between 2000 and 2009. The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, Hofstra University School of Law, The Justice at Stake Campaign and the National Institute on Money in State Politics indicated that the influence of money in judicial elections continues to cast a shadow on judicial elections.

The report makes the following statements:

The surge in spending is pronounced and systemic. Campaign fundraising more than doubled, from \$83.3 million in 1990-1999 to \$206.9 million in 2000-2009. Three of the last five Supreme Court election cycles topped \$45 million. All but two of the 22 states with contestable Supreme Court elections had their costliest-ever contests in the 2000-2009 decade.

Special-interest "super spenders" played a central role in this surge. A study of 29 elections in the nation's most costly election states shows the extraordinary power of super spender groups. The top five spenders in each of these elections invested an average of \$473,000, while the remaining 116,000 contributors averaged \$850 each. In the most widely publicized case, one coal executive spent \$3 million to elect a West Virginia judge. The disparity suggests that a small number of special interests dominated judicial election spending even before the "Citizens United" case ended bans on election spending by corporations and unions.

In 2007-08, five states felt the worst blast of the super spender phenomenon. When TV spending by political parties and special-interest groups is factored in, Pennsylvania broke the \$10 million barrier, while spending reached \$8.5 million in Wisconsin. Texas and Alabama each topped \$5 million, and Michigan, which had just under \$5 million in fundraising and independent TV ads, witnessed some of the cycle's most brutal campaign commercials.

Partisan races drew the most cash, but that may be changing. Candidates in partisan Supreme Court elections raised \$153.8 million nationally in 2000-09, compared with \$50.9 million in nonpartisan elections (retention candidates raised \$2.2 million). But in some states, notably Wisconsin in 2007-08 and Georgia in 2006, nonpartisan races have been just as costly and nasty as their partisan counterparts.

Special-interest money sometimes comes with a cost. The candidate who raised the most money won 11 of 17 contested high court races in 2007-08. But three well-funded incumbent chief justices were defeated, perhaps in part because they were tied to special-interest patrons.

The trends continued in 2009. In Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Louisiana, candidates and independent groups spent a total of about \$8.7 million on 2009 elections. And in each race, candidates accused opponents of being ethically tainted.

**LWVC MEMBERSHIP
2011-2012**

I/We want to (re)join the League. Please check one or more:

- _____ one-year individual membership \$60
 _____ one-year household membership \$90
 (two sharing an address)
 _____ my/our dues plus something extra _____
 _____ sustaining member \$100

Please make checks payable to the LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Name _____
 Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
 Telephone _____ Email _____

_____ Yes, I would you like to receive the "Voter" and other League updates online.
 (Your mailing information is NOT sold/leased to organizations outside LWV.)

Mail to: Membership
 League of Women Voters Cleveland Area
 850 Euclid Avenue, Suite 1010
 Cleveland, OH 44114



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
 CLEVELAND AREA &
 CLEVELAND EDUCATIONAL FUND

Making Democracy Work for Over 90 Years

850 Euclid Avenue, Suite 1010
 Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Contact Information

Phone: 216-781-8375
 Fax: 216-619-5026
 Website: www.lwvcef.org

DIVERSITY POLICY

The League of Women Voters of the Cleveland Area is committed to achieve a membership representative of the multicultural composition of our city. Membership is open to all persons, age 18 or older, regardless of color, creed, national origin, race or sex. League welcomes the diversity of thought, opinion and ideas reflective of all citizens in our democracy.

Member of Community Shares