



INSIDE THIS EDITION

President's Message

Page 1-2

West Valley Education Forum

Page 1

Coming Events

Page 2

Book Donation Project Thanks

Page 3

Improving AZ's Economy

Page 3-4

Consensus on Money and Politics

Page 4

One Arizona 2016 Voting Summit

Page 5

The Voter

January 2016

<http://nwmc.az.lwvnet.org/>



From President Saunders

The year 2015 has come to an end and I wish all of you a very Happy Holiday Season and a return to business early in 2016. On December 19th, I headed to California to visit my grandchildren and returned on January 1st.

More than 20 members and friends enjoyed the Holiday Party on December 3rd with help from Patty's outdoor heaters. Many thanks to Patty for hosting this event -- we had a great time, with good foodcontinued page 2

Mark your calendars now for the --

West Valley Education Forum



"School Success Begins at Birth"

(Early Childhood: Importance to later school and life success and what is available and needed in Arizona)

Thursday, January 28

7:00 pm

Dysart Education Center

(15802 North Parkview Place, Surprise)

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Debbie Pischke

Early Childhood Director

Peoria Unified School District

**Attend, Learn, Discuss
and be a part of efforts to improve
Arizona education!**

Co-Sponsors include:

The League of Women Voters of NW Maricopa County
First Things First-NW Regional Council,
Children's Action Alliance, Expect More Arizona,
AZSOS (Support Our Schools), Bringing Up Arizona,
Dysart USD (Unified School District), Peoria USD,
Nadaburg USD, Buckeye ESD, Litchfield ESD,
AAUW-NW Valley Branch
Dysart Community Center, SW Human Development,
Dysart ASSET, Marley Park PTA
and other groups

President's Message continued

(thanks to all who brought a potluck dish) and conversation. It was warm enough to sit outside the whole time, albeit with a little help from Patty's outdoor heaters. Thanks to everyone who brought books or who donated money for the book project for Dysart students, which we have been doing for almost 20 years.

We often cooperate with the **Sun Cities/West Valley NOW** by publicizing its meetings. Here is some information on an upcoming meeting of that organization.

What: Talk on current legislation concerning women in AZ, including reproductive health care and current issues concerning Planned Parenthood.

Who: Rivko Knox of the AZ ACLU and the LWV of MetroPhoenix

When: Wednesday, January 6, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

Where: UU Church, 17540 N. Avenue of the Arts, Surprise.

Be sure to put on your calendar the January meetings: the Consensus on Money in Politics on the 12th and the general meeting on early childhood education on the 28th. See the first page for more details.

.....BONNIE SAUNDERS

COMING EVENTS IN JANUARY & FEBRUARY

Mark your calendar!



Tuesday, Jan. 12th -- Unit Meeting -- *Consensus on LWV/US Review/Update on "Money and Politics"* -- home of Judy Dreskin; brown bag lunch at noon; meeting at 1 pm.

Thursday, Jan. 28th -- General Meeting - 7 pm. West Valley Education Forum focused on the Impact of Early Childhood Education on later school and life success -- keynote speaker: Dr. Debbie Pischke, Early Childhood Director, Peoria Public Schools. Location to be determined. Stay tuned for additional information.

Monday, Feb. 8th - New Member Meeting - 3 pm. Wine and cheese with information about the League at all levels. Home of Jeana Peterson

Tuesday, Feb. 9th - Unit Meeting - LWV/US Program Planning for Convention and local program planning. Home of Diane Smith.

Thursday, Feb. 25th - General Meeting - 9:30 am. Speaker on Transportation. UU Church.

PLEASE NOTE: Items for the January newsletter should be contributed no later than January 20th to Joye Kohl, editor, (joyebk - AT- gmail.com). Thank you.



Thanks

to our members for another successful book donation project to benefit Dysart USD students --

For many years, our League has collected books from members to donate to the Dysart Unified School District. The 54 books donated by our League members will help the Dysart USD district as it continues to face serious budget issues resulting from state funding cuts, a rapidly growing student population over the past decade and the demands of a higher than average population of Title I students.

The "Move On When Reading" law requires students to read at a prescribed reading level in order to be promoted to the 4th grade. The Dysart USD worked to identify and intervene with those students needing extra help. When tested in the spring of 2014, only 16 students or less than 1 percent of the 1985 3rd graders in the Dysart USD failed to meet the requirements and received additional remediation

The recently passed override election does not address all the instructional and staffing needs. Neither will the settlement plan meet budget needs since it represents less than 80 percent of the actual settlement ordered by the courts.

As an A district in AZ receiving numerous awards including national identity as a district providing cost effective instruction, funding for Dysart remains crucial. Intervention efforts are the reasons the more than 24,000 Dysart students have outpaced state outcomes.

Improving Arizona's Economy: The Need for Strong Public Education

Much has been written about Arizona's economy and its failure to bounce back after the recession as has happened in many other states. The state has provided countless tax breaks and other enticements to attract business, but the success rate of the methods has been far less helpful than predicted by the proponents of the measures.

At the same time, Arizona has undercut public education at all levels regardless of the proven track record between education, work force capacity, business development and the economy. Consider the funding cuts which have continued to be made to public education at all levels.

- ★ a cut of \$218 million from state funded full-day kindergarten to state funding for only half-day kindergarten.
- ★ serious reductions in funding of CTE (career-technical education). (Interestingly, although many in the state lament performance of AZ students on high stakes testing, the average performance of CTE concentrator students is 90+ percent. So one might ask why undercut CTE.)
- ★ cutbacks in funding for textbooks, technology, etc
- ★ removal of funding for public school career ladders to help retain teachers (Instead, the state is experiencing the extreme exodus of well-trained teachers from the state).
- ★ cuts to Joint Technical Education Districts
- ★ severely reduced funding for the state's community colleges or in the case of Maricopa and Pima County Community College District, total elimination of state funding. (Students in Maricopa County Community College District now pay \$87 per credit hour to attend our state located but not state-funded community colleges.)
- ★ serious reductions in university funding

.....continued page 4

Striker - Gambit or Gimmick?

Many people may wonder about the meaning of the terminology "*STRIKER*" or "*strike everything*" as related to Arizona legislation. Our own Joan Novy provided us with an excellent white paper to facilitate better understanding of the "strike-everything" amendments used in the AZ legislature. As Joan asks, "The process is legal, but is it in best interests of the voter?" Read her paper and see what you think! It can be accessed at the following link to our website- http://www.nwmc.az.lwvnet.org/files/Striker_Bills_White_Paper.pdf

-----Actually, if you have not investigated our local, the state or national League websites, you will find lots of good information contained on each site.

Improving Arizona's Economy: The Need for Strong Public Education -- continued from page 3....

At the same time that public schools, community colleges and universities have suffered severe funding losses, priority has been given by the legislature to private schooling for a smaller group of students. The empowerment scholarship program which diverts monies from the general fund through tuition tax credits was created 18 years ago and was projected to cost \$4.5 million a year, but now tops \$140 million. As Ali Beard Rau reported in The Republic in July 2015, "Despite its explosive growth, the program has failed to keep its promise of primarily aiding special needs and low-income students and of expanding school choice." In fact, "the definition of low-income for this tax credit is a family of four with an annual income of \$82,996."

The official public rhetoric from the Governor and many in the Legislature is that Arizona's budget surplus this year, should be used for tax cuts for individuals and further tax breaks for business. However, Arizonan's had another idea when asked in a December poll by the non partisan Strategies 360 what we should do with the current state budget surplus. "The number one answer was "Invest in public schools" with 72 percent. Number two was "Increase public school teacher pay" with 69 percent. Law enforcement and border security came in third and fourth, followed by funding for foster children services and all-day pre-kindergarten. The respondents were 43 percent Republican and 33 percent Democrat. Only 18 percent called themselves liberal, while 42 percent called themselves conservative." (from the Tucson Weekly Dec. 16, 2015)

If we truly want to insure a healthy economy, a strong middle class of citizens and a workforce equal to the needs of a changing culture and society, we must each stand up for public education and press for the restoration of funding for our public schools, community colleges and universities.

Prop 123 will not solve the problem for public school funding, rather, if passed by the voters in May; it is a first step only and will still leave a huge public school funding deficit. More school funding is needed NOW during the legislative session. Urge your legislators to use the money in the bank (budget surplus and rainy day fund) to help restore the critical cutbacks made to public education funding in prior legislative sessions. It is time to speak up and hold our legislature accountable for the benefit of all Arizonans -- not just a few. Consistent with our state Constitution, we need a strong system of public education for each and every citizen of this state. Speak up for public education and help pave the way in creating a work-force to meet Arizona's economic needs today and in the future.

-----Joye Kohl, co-chair of Education

January 12th Unit Meeting: Consensus Meeting on Money & Politics

President Bonnie Saunders has sent out the questions for the consensus meeting and says she will send them out again for those of us who may have misplaced our original email. She will also include the link to more information. Please print the questions and come to the meeting ready to participate in this important session. If you have ever expressed concern about the impact of money in public policy decision making, this should be just the opportunity to be heard and to have an impact on the League position.



If you want to get to know everyone better, bring your sack lunch and visit during the noon hour. Then stay for the meeting. The meeting will be at the home of Judy Dreskin. Please consult your directory for the address.

***One Arizona 2016 Voting Summit
MLK Day - Monday, January 18
Carl Hayden High School***

The Arizona Advocacy Foundation invites us to join their MLK Day Event, One Arizona 2016 Voting Summit, on Monday, January 18, 2016, at Carl Hayden High School, breakfast begins at 8:30 a.m. The event is free and open to the public. RSVP is necessary for space and meal accommodations. Contact Viva Samuel Ramirez at 602-297-2500 or viva@azadvocacy.org.

This conference will invite participants to examine the nature of the systems which make up our governments and ultimately influence the quality of our lives. The ONE ARIZONA TABLE, along with the Arizona Advocacy Network, PAFCO, Promise Arizona, and a team of speakers will explore the spectrum of civic engagement, highlighting passed lessons, the dynamics of the present landscape as well as new strategies developed for the coming election cycle. They will also consider the tools that will enable communities, and/or individuals to engage the legislative system and become effective advocates across all planes of government.

Some of our members will be attending. If you would like to carpool, please let Carol Mattoon know.