

The Voter

News from the League of Women Voters of NW Maricopa County

February 2015

Message from the President:

We've had some time to reflect on the November elections and what they might mean for our state and nation. This was the main purpose of the January event held in Tucson by AZGT (Arizona and Greater Tucson LWV). The format was a video taping by Channel 12 of a series of panel discussions by three different groups of observers of the political scene. A limited number of audience members were invited to watch the proceedings. Two seats were available for LWV/NWMC. Susan Penner and I made the trip to Tucson to join the audience. Channel 12 will air the discussions, and a CD also will be available.

The main focus of the discussion was on dark money: Can the voters afford it? Does it suppress the vote? Does it prevent voters from meeting the candidates? Does it prevent candidates from controlling their campaigns? Why were there so few voters in the last election? These questions, and more, were discussed by reporters from the Capitol Times, the Arizona Republic, KPNX-TV and the Tucson Weekly. Three professional advisers to candidates and three college professors of government also participated. There seemed to be little consensus about the effects of Dark Money; the candidate advisers indicated that money is certainly the way to get a candidate elected.

And speaking of elections, it's that time of year again for our League to select several new members for officer and director positions. Diane Smith, our nominating chair, and her team will be contacting our membership during the next few weeks to determine interest levels. Our bylaws require us to have a slate of officers and directors announced 30 days before our Annual Meeting. That meeting is on April 9 this year at Briarwood Country Club. Also on April 9 we will announce the 2015 "You Make a Difference" award winner. Contact last year's winner, Valerie Ellien, if you have a nomination for the award.

We have several interesting Unit and General Membership meetings coming up in February and March, including Bonnie Boyce-Wilson's March 10 program on Human Trafficking at the home of Lois Brechner. See the articles below for other meetings.

Jean Darnell, President - 2013-2015

50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools

February 10 Unit Meeting

In the book, "50 Myths and Lies," David Berliner, Gene Glass and their associates expose the "mythical failure of public education" as created and perpetuated in large part by political and economic interests that stand to gain from the destruction of the traditional system.

Read it, peruse it and come ready to dissect and discuss the findings they present at our **Noon brown-bag lunch, then 1 p.m. discussion**, at Patty Lang's home in SCW. See your membership directory for address.

-- Book discussion led by John and Joye Kohl

Arizona Schools: Budgets, Taxes, Spending NW Valley Education Forum 7 p.m. - Thursday, Feb. 26th

"Arizona Schools: Budgets, Taxes and Spending" will be the focus of the LWV-NWMC Education Forum on Thursday, Feb. 26th at 7 p.m. Amy Kobeta, of the Children's Action Alliance (CAA) will keynote the public forum.

CAA has served as a voice for Arizona's children for more than 25 years. With graphs and slides, the CAA vice president will discuss questions and answers important to understanding the fiscal issues facing the state and how they impact the education and protection of children and youth. "If you want a better understanding of the current state of Arizona's budget and taxes as we head into policy decisions this legislative session, this education forum is a must-attend event," notes LWV-NWMC co-education chairs Joye and John Kohl. Attend and explore factors contributing to and for overcoming budget problems, as well as the status of 2015 legislation.

The public forum scheduled at the Unitarian-Universalist Church will highlight the key facts and trends about past policies, current challenges and future opportunities. Information from the State Superintendent's Annual Report for 2013-14 on public school expenditure patterns will be reviewed. For more information or questions, contact Joye Kohl.

NOTE: There is a possibility the forum may be moved to a more central location. If so, an e-blast will be mailed to members and posted on the website.

Grass Roots Rise Up

BY JOYE KOHL

In the midst of tragedy, two grass roots groups have spontaneously grown on behalf of Dysart area kids.

What was the tragedy? Voter apathy resulted in the loss of the Dysart USD Override election last November. Among eligible voters, 18 percent voted yes and 19 percent voted no. And, 12,000 people voted for another candidate or issue on the ballot but neither voted yes or no for the override. As an election consequence, six million program specific dollars had to be cut from the Dysart budget for the next academic year. All-day kindergarten has been cut to one-half day with 40 kindergarten teachers rified. Another 103 teachers across the district have also been rified and there are many more cuts which are going to dramatically impact students in the Dysart "A" performing district.

But, there is also some good news: The night of the election, as Dysart parents realized the election was going down, they interacted on social media. From those interactions, parents joined forces and organized *YES for Dysart Children* and *Dysart-ASSET* (Advocate, Support, Student, Education, Teacher). On Jan. 24th, my husband and I attended a public meeting at the NW Regional Library sponsored by the two groups. The parents are doing their homework, delving into the issues, planning and speaking out for their kids as they promote and seek to pass the next override election.

As a public school activist myself, I felt the genuine anguish of the parents and concern for the kids but I was also energized by the parents' passion and commitment to the education of their children. They believe in and support their schools. We need to also support these groups and their mission on behalf of school age children in this area. Our young people represent our collective future and our public schools are the very cornerstone of our democracy.

To learn more about the groups, check out their website and Facebook pages. For *Yes for Dysart Children*, see <http://www.dysartoverride.com> and on Facebook - *Yes for Dysart Children*. For *Dysart ASSET*, there is a closed Facebook group (requires admittance for membership).

March 26 General Membership Meeting: **"Election Protection / Creative Solutions for Increasing and Sustaining Voter Participation"**

9:30-11 a.m., at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Surprise

Our speakers will be the Hon. Leslie Hoffman, Yavapai County Recorder, Lynn Constable, Yavapai County Elections Director and Helen Purcell, Maricopa County Recorder. The goal of our program is to showcase creative and positive programs that have been or will be implemented in Arizona by two counties to increase/facilitate voter participation. By sharing information and ideas, we hope to stimulate the development of more of these imaginative types of programs across the state, and hopefully be a positive step in constructively countering the voter suppression laws that are being passed across the U.S. which make it more difficult for some to vote.

Ms. Hoffman and Ms. Constable are innovators who have initiated, developed and incorporated unique, successful, voting programs and policies in Yavapai County to increase voter registration and facilitate ease of voting. They have thought outside the box and made voting more attainable. On March 26, they will enlighten and educate us about many of the cutting-edge things they have successfully implemented, explaining what works and how they did it.

For instance, Yavapai County was one of two counties in Arizona to make the switch for the 2012 elections to multiple Voting Centers where voters from all districts can vote, allowing every voter in Yavapai County to choose where they vote on Election Day, compared to traditional precinct-based voting which required voters to go to an assigned polling place to vote. Ballots from every precinct are available at every voting center location and are printed "on demand" for each voter. Yavapai County uses electronic poll books (similar to tablets) to verify registered voters. They make it easy to find the Voting Center closest to where people live with an Interactive Map (<http://www.yavapai.us/electionsvr/>).

They have also incorporated other successful programs, such as engaging high school students, training them to work at vote centers on Election Day. In addition, Yavapai County has a travel board that goes to assisted and independent living facilities as well as nursing homes throughout the county. They travel to these locations first to register voters and update information on existing registrants. Once the early voting period begins, they return enabling them to cast their ballot. This service allows those who face the challenges of transportation an opportunity to vote.

Helen Purcell was elected Maricopa County Recorder in 1988 and is now serving her 7th term. She has served on many boards and commissions, receiving many awards. In

1998, she received the National Kids Voting Excellence Award. In 2004, she was appointed by the Chairman of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission to the newly formed Technical Guidelines Development Committee whose purpose was to draft standards for all voting systems in the United States. Because of her leadership, ingenuity and excellence, Helen was presented the prestigious [2010 NACRC Public Official of the Year Award](#). Under her leadership, the Recorder's office has received many achievement awards for Digital Recording and use of the Internet in the redistricting process.

We are excited to say that we have 12 confirmed co-sponsors of this important program! Hopefully, others in our community will be inspired and become engaged and work with us.

Following the meeting, we will have light refreshments. We hope folks will stay to continue the discussion and brainstorm ways we might be able to work to make a significant impact to facilitate the ease of voting, and thus increase voter participation in our county.

ADDENDUM

To give you a little background on how this up-coming meeting came about:

On April 26, 2014, five of our League members attended an extremely informative and stimulating American Bar Association (ABA) Town Hall meeting in Tempe on Election Reform. It was one of five Town Hall meetings held by the ABA across the U.S. Leslie Hoffman, Yavapai County Recorder, and Lynn Constabile, Yavapai County Elections Director, were also participants at this meeting. They shared several exciting things they are doing in Yavapai County to increase voter participation. This meeting led to brainstorming about what we could constructively and actively do as local organizations in regard to Election Reform/Voter Enablement. We became excited about the possibility of having a community-wide meeting on the topic. The five of us who attended the ABA meeting came away enthused and inspired, and we hoped that also would be the outcome of this program.

To give you a little background on this particular topic:

In a Democracy, citizens should be encouraged to vote and policies put in place to facilitate voting. However, recently, in states across our nation, laws have been enacted to suppress the vote of many, trying to make it more difficult to vote, by imposing a host of policies to make voting inconvenient or extremely difficult. Some of the restrictions include fewer precincts in minority areas resulting in long lines on election day, massive purging of voters from the rolls, limiting the acceptable forms of identification, ending opportunities for students to vote at their college residency, reducing hours and/or number of days allowed for early voting, increased regulation of voter registration drives, increased restrictions on felony voting, etc. These laws affect and burden young students who are away at college, seniors, people of color, and low-income and minority voters who lack acceptable forms of identification. These groups often do not have photo

identification, or immediate access to, or the money needed to secure a birth certificate, if one exists at all (the elderly who were born in the south often have no official birth certificate, it was merely recorded in a Bible), or the time needed to travel to the state office to pay for a birth certificate or a computer to do the transaction online. All this affects voter participation and turnout.

Because elections are locally administered in the United States, voter accessibility policies vary among jurisdictions. At the founding of the country, most states limited the right to vote to property-owning white males. Over time, the right to vote was formally granted to racial minorities, women, and youth. However, throughout the latter 19th and early 20th centuries, Southern states passed [Jim Crow laws](#) to suppress poor and racial minority voters; among other things, such laws included [poll taxes](#), [literacy tests](#), and [grandfather clauses](#). Most of these tactics were made illegal after the enactment of the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#).

However, new Restrictive Voter Access Legislation (RVAL) is now being implemented. Research has shown that tactics to depress voter turnout have become an integral part of elections in the USA. When political entities advocate for such policies, they typically use positive language such as "voter security" and "anti-voter fraud," to justify their actions; but there is little evidence to prove that voter fraud is a significant problem in the United States.

Regretfully, voter restrictions and limited accessibility efforts played a crucial role in driving voter turnout to historic lows in 2014. The League of Women Voters on the national, state, and local level are trying to make a difference by working to increase voter education and involvement in elections in a variety of ways. This program is one.

- Carol Mattoon

Many thanks to Linda Vitale

LWV/ NWMC member, Linda Vitale, has volunteered to be our new Telephone Tree coordinator! Thanks, Linda, for so generously offering your time and talents to oversee this important task. We have 11 volunteer callers who are assigned from 1-5 League members to contact to remind them of upcoming meetings. Many thanks to all the callers and their new coordinator!

- Carol Mattoon

LWVNWMC Garage Sale - Saturday, March 21

For the past decade or more, I have invited League members to bring "stuff" that you no longer want to my house in March for the Coyote-Lakes-wide community garage sale. This year the sale is on Saturday, March 21 and I will accept your "stuff" during my GCC Spring Break the week before.

Before you bring your "stuff," however, be sure to e-mail me to make sure that I am home -- Monday, Tuesday and Friday will be the best days. Acceptable items include books, clothes, kitchen items, other household items, jewelry, trinkets, handmade things, yarn, fabric, furniture, electronic items, small appliances, and odds and ends.

I will need two or three helpers for each of the two parts of the sale: [1] setup about 6:30 a.m. through about 9 a.m.; [2] 9 a.m. through cleanup up, about 11:30 a.m. Anyone who can help for any part of these time frames, please e-mail me as soon as you know. See your Membership Directory for my email and phone information.

-- Bonnie Saunders

"INTERESTING WOMEN OF COLOR" The West Valley NOW Celebration of WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 2015

*Featuring Barbara Arnold --
Detroit Black Story Tellers and
National Black Story Tellers Association --
Teaching and telling black stories for over 25 years*

When: 2 p.m. on Saturday March 14

**Where: Unitarian Universalist Church,
17540 Avenue of the Arts, Surprise.**

Reservations: call Betty Roberts (623-972-6273) or e-mail her:

bettyroberts88@gmail.com

**Cost: \$15 - includes refreshments and NOW's Scholarship Fund for a
graduating Dysart High School coed.**



You could win . . .

1-Week Vacation in this Show Low, AZ. home!

Raffle tickets: \$20 each

(Only 100 tickets will be sold)

Property photos can be viewed online at www.vrbo.com (property # 458194)

Date of occupancy to be determined between the winner and property owner (**excluding July, August, September 2015**). Drawing will be held on Sunday, May 17, during the LWVAZ 2015 Convention at Yavapai College, Verde Campus, Clarkdale, AZ. Winner need not be present to win. A refundable \$200 damage deposit will be required prior to occupancy.

Proceeds to benefit the League of Women Voters
of Arizona Education Fund, a 501(c)3 non-profit



For tickets, contact Rita Young: rita44@hotmail.com

Nominating committee seeks officers

As terms in office end for select officers and directors, the LWV/NWMC will be seeking members to run for League president and 1st VP. Our bylaws require us to have a slate of officers and directors announced 30 days before our Annual Meeting on April 9. Some of the duties that will need to be handled include website operation, publicity, newsletter and membership. If you would like to fill one of these or other roles in our organization, contact Diane Smith, nominating chair, Rita Young or Bonnie Saunders.

Save the Date: April 9 - our Annual Meeting

Briarwood Country Club will be the location of our Annual Meeting on Thursday, April 9. Stay tuned for more information coming in the March issue of The Voter. We will have a silent auction this year depending on the availability of enough members to help organize an auction. Please contact Jean Darnell if you are willing to help solicit auction items and help organize this great fundraiser.

We now have a website link with an easier name!

We now have a link to our website that's much easier to remember: lwvVotes.com. Not to worry . . . you can still get to the website using the old name that's currently on most of our marketing materials, like our pens. Beginning in February, our new marketing materials will use our League's new website address. Use it, tell your friends and neighbors . . . it's easy to remember.

Did you know . . .

. . . the League of Women Voters of Arizona Education Fund is the 501c3 organization (tax-deductible) that is shared by all five Leagues in Arizona. LWV/ NWMC has an account within the LWVAZ Ed Fund where we can deposit and request funds for appropriate educational uses. So, your donation to the LWVAZ Education Fund benefits the members of NWMC, too. Now you know!

LWV/ NWMC website: lwvVotes.com

Send information to The Voter by the 27th of each month in order to get your information into the next newsletter edition. Contact Rita Young, news editor, at rita44@hotmail.com with any suggestions or questions.