

The Voter

News from the League of Women Voters of NW Maricopa County

January 2015

Message from the President:

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope your holiday season was merry, and that you are anticipating a great year in 2015. It promises to be an interesting time in our League.

First, be sure to attend our January 13 Unit Meeting. The meeting will be at the home of Bobbie Zelkind where Lois Brechner and Bonnie Saunders will lead the League's Program Planning discussion at 1 p.m. after the Noon brown-bag luncheon (see article for more details).

Next, you are invited to our General Membership meeting at 9:30 a.m. on January 22 encouraging consumer protection laws in Arizona, to be held at the Advent Episcopal Church in Sun City West (see article). This event is spearheaded by League member Colleen Fogarty.

February and March Unit and General Membership meetings also offer stimulating discussions on Education (Joye & John Kohl), Human Trafficking (Bonnie Boyce-Wilson) and Voting issues (Carol Mattoon & Jan Lundstrom) (see articles).

Also in February is the Annual Civic Learning Conference which is sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education and several colleges. Your Board has voted to sponsor scholarships for two social studies teachers in the Dysart Unified School District to attend the conference which is being presented this year on Thursday, February 26. As a sponsor, we have been invited to present League materials to encourage membership opportunities to a younger audience. Barbara Knutson, our Civic Engagement Chair, and Rita Young, our Membership Director, will attend.

We look forward to all the expert presentations at our Tuesday Unit meetings and Thursday General meetings. Check out the complete meeting schedule on the Calendar page of our website at www.nwmc.az.lwvnet.org.

Jean Darnell - President, 2013-15

Join us for the January 13 Unit Meeting

by Lois Brechner

On January 13th at the home of Bobbie Zelkind, we will be choosing our state and local program priorities for 2015-16. This is a great opportunity to make a difference in the direction our League and the state League chooses to take in the near future. Please join us, bring your ideas and react to those of other members.

Right now the League of Women Voters of Arizona's top priorities are Voting Rights, Voter Registration, Election Process, Redistricting, Campaign Finance, Education Funding and Education Standards. Women's Issues, Initiative and Referendum and Independent Judiciary are also being closely monitored. Our local League's Issues for Emphasis now are Alternative Transportation, Civic Engagement, Education and End of Life Choices.

How do you want us to pursue these issues? What other issues should we consider where we can make positive waves in Arizona? Hope to see everyone at our first meeting in 2015.

Consumer protection topic at next General meeting

by Colleen Fogarty

The League of Women Voters of NW Maricopa County will sponsor an informative panel discussion on January 22 to provide attendees with current facts about consumer protection for senior citizens. Arizona is the only state in the nation that does not have a consumer protection law – a distinction known all too well by unethical consumer-service companies and individual workers who consider seniors the easiest of their prey.

A panel of community leaders will lead the discussion, including a representative from the Arizona Attorney General's Office, from PORA and from a church men's club that has initiated a consumer assistance program. Join us to learn how consumer protection laws in other states successfully curtail and penalize scammers and rip-off artists. Bring your questions, comments and your neighbors. The panel discussion begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Advent Episcopal Church located at 13150 Spanish Garden Dr., in Sun City West. Ample parking is available. For additional information, contact Colleen Fogarty after 7:30 p.m. Her information is in the Membership directory.

Please join us after the General meeting . . .

. . . for a Dutch lunch at Birt's Bistro following Jan. 22 meeting for friendship-building and discussion. We would love to hear from you if you are interested in joining the Lunch Bunch so that we can make adequate reservations, but last-minute lunchers are welcome as well. Call Carol Mattoon. Birt's is located just off Bell Road, between Sun City and Sun City West, at 16752 N. Greasewood St., Surprise.

50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools

February 10 Unit Meeting

Book discussion led by John and Joye Kohl

Education articles by Joye Kohl

Have you ever questioned the rhetoric about public education? 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. The authors use hard-hitting and evidence-based data along with a touch of comic relief to separate fact from fiction in this short, meaty and very readable book exploring modern education reform. If you care about public education, it is a must read!

David Berliner is an educational psychologist and former professor and dean of the ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. Gene Glass is a Regents' Professor Emeritus at ASU and currently he is a senior researcher at the National Education Policy Center and research professor at the Univ. of Colorado at Boulder. Their associates are their hand-picked top doctoral students from ASU and the Univ. of CO.

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.

The funding of public education - Where does all that tax money go?

February 26 General Meeting - West Valley Education Forum

Come and explore the sources, challenges, demands and inequities in funding public education. Stay tuned for more details about this current issue and very critical topic.

Election Protection: Overcoming Voter Suppression

March 26th General Membership Meeting

Election Protection articles by Carol Mattoon

Our speakers will be Hon. Leslie Hoffman, Yavapai County Recorder, and Lynn Constabile, Yavapai County Elections Director. Ms. Hoffman and Ms. Constabile 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. Our program will hopefully be a positive step in constructively countering the voter suppression laws that are happening across the U.S.

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.

The speakers will showcase what one county in Arizona is doing to increase voter participation and help us explore possible areas where we might be able to work to make a significant impact to facilitate ease of voting, and thus increase voter participation in our county. Join us at 9:30 a.m. at the Unitarian Universal Church in Surprise; coffee and conversation at 9 a.m., with Dutch lunch after the meeting.

ELECTION PROTECTION - ADDENDUM

Background on how this upcoming meeting came about:

Last year, five 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. We came away enthused and inspired, and wanting to do something constructive to facilitate voting in our county also. We hope that would be the outcome of this program, also.

Topic Background:

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, 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 suppression varies 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 voter suppression tactics were made illegal after the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

However, new contemporary voter suppression techniques are now being implemented. Research has shown that suppression of voters has become an integral part of voting in the USA. When political entities advocate for voter suppression 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 suppression efforts played a crucial role in driving voter turnout to historic lows in 2014.

Opening Day Rally at the Legislature

Save the date: LWVAZ is joining with Progress Arizona to coordinate a progressive rally at the Arizona Legislature in Phoenix on Monday, January 12. Stay tuned for more details coming soon.

We need a phone tree coordinator

E-mail, our usual way of communicating within the League, is an easy and inexpensive way to keep our members up to date on what is happening. However, some of our members do not have e-mail, others of us write the information on our calendar and then forget to check it and miss an important event. A Phone Tree is a quick and effective way to remind members about meetings, alert them about last-minute changes of scheduled meetings or events, and/or generate interest in an upcoming activity.

Therefore, last April, eleven wonderful Leaguers graciously volunteered to be callers for our newly-formed League of Women Voters NWMC Phone Tree. They call fellow League members to remind and encourage them to attend our interesting, important and exciting upcoming events. Even though all the organizing of the Phone Tree has been accomplished and the callers have been "in action" for our past few meetings, we still need a coordinator to work with the team. If you are willing to consider taking on this activity, it would be greatly appreciated. Just e-mail or phone me (info in Membership directory) and we can further discuss what the task entails. It is not labor intensive, yet it is a very valuable asset to our League. A word of thanks again to our volunteers who so generously volunteer their time to add this special, personal touch! Together we can make a positive difference! Now let's have some fun!

-- Carol Mattoon

Social time with coffee, conversation & more

For a half hour before our morning General Meetings (when held at the UU Church), we are hosting a social time with coffee and conversation. Come enjoy getting better acquainted with fellow Leaguers and guests!

We are experimenting to see if you like this informal time to get together and share some friendly conversation with one another. If so, we are in need of one or two people who are willing to take charge of this activity, i.e. making coffee, setting out cups, etc. Contact Carol Mattoon (info in Membership directory).

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