

# The Voter

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Ames, IA  
Web-site: <http://www.ameslww.org>

## March 2008

### Mark Your Calendar

#### March 15 - Saturday

##### Legislative Wake-Up

Social Time: 8:30 AM

8:45 - 10 AM Forum and Broadcast

Ames City Council Chambers

#### March 26 - Wednesday

**Book Club** - Watchdogs of Democracy? The Waning Washington Press Corps and How It Has Failed the Public by Helen Thomas led by Barbara Gwiasda as hostess, 3420 Eisenhower Ave.

#### March 27 - Thursday

**Please Note change to the fourth Thursday**

##### General Meeting 7:30 PM

LWVIA Study: "Delivery of Mental Health Services in Story County",

Northminster Presbyterian Church- Fireplace Room 1416 20<sup>th</sup>

#### April 11 - Friday

##### Meeting with Nigerian Women 2:30 PM

Ames City Hall, 515 Clark Ave

#### April 19 - Saturday

##### Legislative Wake-Up

##### Social Time: 8:30 AM

8:45 - 10 AM Forum and Broadcast

Ames City Council Chambers

#### April 23 - Wednesday

**Book Club** - The Supreme Court: The Personalities and Rivalries That Defined America by Jeffrey Rosen led by Mary Jo Brearley as hostess, 1537 Linden Dr.

#### April 26 - Saturday

##### Annual Meeting and Brunch

##### 9:00 to 11:00 AM

Green Hills Retirement Community Dining Room  
2200 Hamilton Drive

#### OTHER MEETINGS - Inclusive Community Task Force

#### April 3 - Thursday

##### Public Input Session - 7 to 8:30 PM

City Auditorium, 515 Clark Ave

#### April 5 - Saturday

##### Public Input Session - 11 AM to 12:30 PM

City Council Chambers, 515 Clark Ave



## Call to Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 26, 2008

Brunch at 9 am

Green Hills Retirement Community  
Dining Room

Call in your reservations or email  
Barbara Munson

at 232-5077 or [amesmunson@aol.com](mailto:amesmunson@aol.com)

**LOOK FOR MENU, PRICE AND  
RESERVATION DEADLINE IN THE APRIL  
VOTER**

### From the President

#### Celebrate Sunshine Week



Have you noticed as much as I have, that sunshine has been in short supply this long winter? Too many dreary, cloudy days in addition to too much snow and ice. However, I do think Spring (and Spring weather) must be just around the corner because the geranium in my office has begun producing it's cheery, pink blossoms. Yeah!

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*(Continued from page 1) Sunshine Week*

However, as much as we might like to demand sunshine, SUNSHINE WEEK is not about the weather. Sunshine Week, March 16-22, is a national initiative aimed at opening dialogue about the importance of transparency in government and freedom of information. The League of Women Voters (LWV) is part of a coalition encouraging all citizens to actively promote open government at all levels. The coalition includes journalists, civic groups, libraries, schools, and others who are concerned about the public's right to open government. For the third year in a row, the LWVUS is actively promoting sunshine week. The media's support has been critical to the success of sunshine week.

What is Sunshine Week really all about? It's about a citizen's right to know what their government is doing, having access to public records and government meetings. Sunshine laws give us access to information and meetings and create government transparency. We must remember that these laws are only as good as we, the people, demand them to be. Getting information can sometimes be tedious, somewhat difficult and time consuming. Some questions have risen recently in the Ames community concerning school and city government. I believe we should thank those monitoring the process and asking the questions regardless of whether or not we agree with their viewpoints.

An important, ongoing activity of the LWV of Ames is the Observer Corp. Perhaps you've noticed these volunteers at public meetings. They're wearing an "Observer" button, sitting quietly at meeting after

meeting. Their job is not to speak, but, to observe and verify that meetings are open to the public, that appropriate notification is given, that an opportunity is given for citizen input, and that the public is treated courteously. Our heartfelt thanks go out to these committed, dedicated volunteers.

In Ames, IA, we have outstanding elected officials who are easily accessible to the public and countless opportunities/invitations to attend open public meetings. It is easy for us to take "sunshine laws" for granted. At the state level, there is currently an effort to strengthen sunshine laws, make it easier to gain access to information and create a public-information board. See the Des Moines Register articles of 3/2 and 3/3 for more details. This proposed change is worthy of your time and study. Check it out, see what you think and then express your opinions to your legislators. For information about how to contact legislative representatives check out the "Voter Guide" at [www.ameslww.org](http://www.ameslww.org).

Plan to celebrate SUNSHINE WEEK. Contact a local or state elected official about something on your mind. Attend a public meeting. On such opportunity is the LWV of Ames Legislative Wake Up on March 15. This is held from 8:45-10 in the Ames City Council Chambers. Open to the public, legislators from both parties representing Ames and Story County will be available for your questions and conversation. Do it because you can. Do it because you live in a democracy. Do it because you care about your community and your government.

By Sharon Wirth  
President

**DO YOU WANT TO FIND MORE ABOUT THE LWV OF AMES?  
GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT**

<http://www.ameslww.org>

### **National Convention, June 13-17**

All League members are invited to the National Convention in Portland, Oregon from June 13-17. Delegates will adopt the national program, elect officers and adopt the LWVUS budget. Educational sessions will include topics such as financial management, diversifying your League, empowering new citizens, growing membership and marketing the League. The convention sounds educational and inspiring. Consider attending. Online registration is available at <http://www.lww.org/convention>.

To receive more news from National League, why not subscribe to their e-letter?  
You can do that at:

<http://www.lww.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home>

REPORT FROM PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING

The Ames League of Women Voters may be on the move next year.

Attendance at our monthly general meetings has been dropping over the last one to two years. This year's board has been discussing the low attendance trend. The discussion expanded during the Feb. 21 2008-09 program planning session, and the small group of League members who braved the cold to attend that night took a look at both our meeting logistics and topics.

Discussion participants noted that some of our long-term members are retired and now live in retirement communities. Other long-term members no longer want to go out during evening hours. Meanwhile, most of our newer and younger members work, and prefer a meeting that occurs at lunchtime or right after normal business hours so they can spend the later hours of the evening with their families.

We also noted that many residents are increasingly paying attention to politics on all levels. We felt that it will be important for our local League to provide information and participation opportunities to local voters on some of these issues.

So the program-planning group has recommended that the Ames League create a program schedule next year that includes a variety of meeting locations, times and topics. Specifically, the group is recommending:

1. Hold one or two of our regular meetings at Northcrest, Green Hills or one of Ames' other retirement communities OR Schedule a couple of separate coffee groups at one of the retirement community locations to keep our older members up-to-date with League activities and issues.
2. Schedule an August evening picnic meeting with a "fun" program and a report from me on the 2008 national convention held in June in Portland, Ore. (The group also was in favor of more humor at other meetings – perhaps issues introduced by humorous skits or audience participation quizzes.)
3. Focus on energy creation and the "green revolution" at one of the fall meetings. If possible, arrange for a late afternoon tour of the city's water and electric facilities and maybe other infrastructure sites where taxpayers will be asked in the future to make large repair or replacement investments.
4. Continue holding "Ames Happening" on an annual

The Ames LWV may be on the move next year.

basis. We received very positive response from the community on our first community update forum featuring the City of Ames mayor, the president of the Ames Community School Board and the chairperson of the Mary Greeley Medical Center Board of Trustees.

The program-planning group suggested that we combine our January meeting and Ames Happening, holding first the forum and then a short membership meeting.

5. Examine the schedule for candidate forums to be held in late August/early September for the school board and late October for the Nov. 4 general elections. Plan ahead to get as many of our members involved as possible and use the forums to also raise awareness of League membership and issues.
6. Examine the schedule for the monthly Legislative Wake-Up Forums held January to April. Evaluate impact, effectiveness, timing and logistics.
7. Forego starting a new local study next year since we participated in National's Immigration Study this year.
8. Start an outreach and welcoming program for local immigrants who have recently become U. S. citizens. Invite them to League meeting or possibly special function. Provide them with information about the community, local issues and encourage them to become involved in the League.

We also came up with an extensive list of program topics for next year, including local immigration impact, health care in our community, affordable housing, our business climate, safety and emergency response networks in the two-mile fringe area, campaign finance reform, the county government structure, the future plans for Ames school buildings and the proposed human services campus.

Quite a list! And these suggestions were from only 10 of our members.

Right now, they are only suggestions. The board members elected at our annual meeting on April 26 will make the final decisions during a retreat in May or June.

If you have any thoughts, or are interested in helping with one or more of these projects, let us know.

Thank you,

Lauris Olson  
President Elect

**GENERAL MEETING, MARCH 27, 2008 (FOURTH THURSDAY IN MARCH)**

**"Delivery of Mental Health Services in Story County"**

The program will be presented by a panel composed of:

- Jane Halliburton, Story County Board of Supervisors
- Anne Armknecht, Executive Director of The Richmond Center
- Deb Schildroth, Director of Story County Community Services and Central Point of Coordination
- Amy Peters, Intensive Case Manager, Story County Jail Diversion Program
- Christy Krause, Director of Behavioral Health, Mary Greeley Medical Center
- Deb Niehoff, Executive Director of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Central Iowa

- How is our tax money involved in providing some of these services?
- What are the various funding sources for mental health services? Is funding adequate for these services to continue to be provided?
- Are the available services adequate to meet the needs in Story County? Do agencies in Story County provide mental health services for those in other counties?
- How are mentally ill offenders in Story County Jail assisted in getting treatment?
- What kind of education and support is available for those who are coping with family members or friends who are mentally ill?

These panelists will help us understand what services are available to individuals living in Story County who are suffering from mental illness. How familiar are you with this subject? Here are a few sample questions:

- What mental health services are available to those who have limited resources? How are these services coordinated to match services to needs?

You are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to learn and ask questions of these knowledgeable panelists. Invite others to join you for a discussion on this important topic.

Familiarity with the mental health services available in Story County and how the services are delivered and paid for will prepare our members to consider concurrence on a state League position next year.

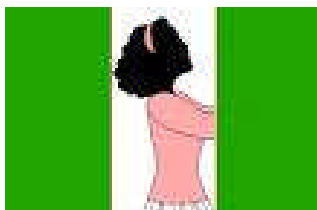
Nancy Brown

**Membership in the League offers  
personal involvement for the public good.  
The League of Women Voters is  
where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to  
civic improvement.**

**Building Bridges**

On Friday, April 11, the LWV of Ames has the opportunity to meet with five visiting Nigerian women leaders. The meeting will be held at 2:30 in the Ames City Hall. We invite you to join us.

These women will be in Ames for about a week through the Iowa Resource for International Service (IRIS). The visit is part of the Women in Nigeria Leadership Program. Their goal is to learn more about state and local government, good governance and women in leadership



positions. The LWV of Ames is one of several groups the women will meet with during their time in Ames.

We are planning a small group meeting to talk about the mission and activities of the LWV of Ames, share stories and exchange ideas. They are very interested in learning about good governance and the impact Ames women are having in local politics. This is a perfect fit for the LWV! If you are interested in participating, please email Sharon at [sharonwirth@yahoo.com](mailto:sharonwirth@yahoo.com) or call her at 233-2415.

League of Women Voters of Ames  
4037 Fletcher Boulevard, Ames, IA 50014  
President: Sharon Wirth  
Voter Editor: Selva Lehman

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

**Make YOUR voice heard . Please attend one of these Community Sponsored Input**



## Is Ames a Welcoming Community? What do YOU think?

### **Inclusive Community Task Force Public Input Sessions**

**7 to 8:30 p.m.**  
**Thursday, April 3**  
**City Auditorium**  
**515 Clark Ave**  
**11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**  
**Saturday, April 5**  
**City Council**  
**Chambers**  
**515 Clark Ave**

The task force is charged with the following responsibilities: .

- To identify and support existing programs and activities in the Ames community which foster greater understanding and better relations within the entire community;
- To identify unmet needs and opportunities for growth and improvement, including use of appropriate practices developed in other communities;
- To keep the community informed about the task force's progress and identification of unmet needs or underutilized resources;
- To report to the community and City Council by April 30 with a report including findings, recommendations, and a plan for regular evaluation of progress.

• Read the Inclusive Community DRAFT report online after Friday, March 28 at <http://www.cityofames.org> Paper copies will be available at the Ames Public Library.

