



The Voter

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

September

September General Meeting an afternoon event

.WHERE DOES YOUR ELECTRICITY COME FROM?
 Thursday, September 18 you can find out. At 3:00 p.m. join a guided tour (for LWV and guests) of the Ames Electric Plant, East Fifth Street. After that we'll convene in Room 235, City Hall, to discuss options for the future of the Ames Electric Utility.

October Candidates' Forums are set

The forum for candidates to the Iowa State Legislature will be at 7 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 20. Voters will be choosing representatives for House Districts 10 (Story County except for Ames and Gilbert), 45 (Ames) and 46 (Ames).

The forum for candidates for Story County Supervisor, Story County Auditor, and Story County Sheriff will be at 7 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 27.

We will need volunteers to staff these forums. To volunteer, call Randi Peters at 292-4722 or e-mail RandiP1970@aol.com.

From the President



The terms "candidate forums" and the "League of Women Voters" share close association in the minds of the residents of Ames, Waterloo, Sioux City, Pella and a handful of other cities in Iowa.

We should be proud that our community so closely connects the Ames League of Women Voters with voter education. We should be grateful that the decisions of past boards and the hard work of hundreds of members over time has kept us strong, focused and visible.

Elsewhere, some local leagues have lost their forum leadership role to special interest groups. Some are non-profits pushing their agenda. Others are commercial enterprises - usually media outlets - battling for increased ad revenues and market share.

League of Women Voters - US has also been shoved aside in recent years, as Mary G. Wilson, our national president, conveyed in an August e-mail update.

Wilson contacted the campaign offices of Republican and Democratic presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama in June offering assistance in organizing one or more presidential debates.

Wilson's letter addressed the issue of special interest sponsored forums head-on, offering the League's experience in navigating debate logistics.

"The many possibilities for presidential debates in 2008 are very intriguing, from a large number of one-on-one, open-ended discussions to a few more traditional, moderated events. We believe that decisions on the nature, number and location of such events are best left to your campaigns. If we

(Continued on page 2)

Mark Your Calendar for September

- September 9** **SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS**
Tuesday *Remember to vote!*
- September 18** **3:00 p.m. General Meeting**
Thursday **Tour Ames Power Plant, 200 E 5th St**
discussion: Rm. 235 City Hall
(see our position on 'Electric Utility')
- September 23** **Things fall apart by Chinua Achebe.**
Book Club Marlene Weisshaar, hostess, 1703 Pierce Ct.
- October 11** **LWVIA Fall Issues Workshop**
Saturday **9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.** Newton, Iowa
 Newton Inn, 2000 West 18th Street South.

Inside this issue:

LWVIA news	3
Catt Center news	3
Book Club Schedule	4
Mark Jackson's Reflection on Ukraine	4

(Continued from page 1) *President*

could facilitate that process in any way, we would be happy to do so.

"The League is organized in more than 800 communities and in every state. Our members are active in their communities and often are opinion leaders. Because of our community involvement and nonpartisan reputation, the League is often asked to get more involved in the process of presidential debates. We would welcome any opportunity to work with you and your campaigns to bring the presidential dialogue to the American public in 2008."

As of Aug. 23, Wilson had not heard from either campaign office.

In July, she contacted the co-chairs of the Commission on Presidential Debates. She pointed out the "exciting and history-in-the-making" experience that this fall would bring. Then she addressed the concern among many voters that present day debates do not provide the balance and question diversity that the League had produced when it was more actively involved.

"Voters are also anxious. They contact the League of Women Voters regularly, urging us to once again get involved with the Presidential and Vice Presidential debates. Newspaper columnists and bloggers call for our involvement, as well.

"We respect the work that the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) has undertaken in the past, and is undertaking this year, to produce high quality debates. However, in response to the voices of so many voters, we are offering to assist you in ensuring that the general election debates remain true to their overall goal: to educate voters on the candidates running for President and Vice President and their positions on the critical issues facing our nation.

"As both the League and CPD know, there are a number of crucial decisions that will impact the overall effectiveness of the debates. In light of the public calls for the League's involvement in and validation of the general election debates, we stand ready to assist you in such crucial decisions as the following:

- the extent to which the broadcast is accessible to all voters

- the choice of moderator(s)
- the decision about who determines the questions
- the use of new technologies
- the role of the studio audience."

This time, Wilson got a reply. It was very short, but it was a reply. Commission representatives offer to meet with LWV - US representatives "if it would help the League."

The shift away from true nonpartisan groups specializing in voter education and service to special interests has come to my attention recently as I have tried to put together a candidates' forum for the Iowa Fourth Congressional District.

As this goes to press, I still don't know whether I have been successful.

When I've organized local forums, usually in conjunction with representatives from the Ames Chamber of Commerce, my energy has been focused on the logistics of timing, formats and volunteer staffing.

It never occurred to me to worry about a candidate's unwillingness to participate. In the last six years, I don't believe we have had one school board, legislative, county or city council candidate miss a forum. A couple have arrived a few minutes late, but none have not shown.

This time, all of my energy has been spent doing nothing but trying to convince one candidate's campaign team that the Ames League of Women Voters is worthy of hosting a congressional debate and that Ames is the place to hold it.

According to Tom Latham campaign staffer Matt Hinch, the League is just one of many "interest groups" who have contacted the campaign.

Democrat Becky Greenwald's staff has already agreed, pending selection of the date. Democrat William Meier, who is now running as an independent, has not been contacted, but will be once we know a forum or debate is likely.

Hinch points out that Greenwald has more flexibility in her schedule. She is the challenger. Latham is the incumbent, said Hinch, which means he has to put the demands of his office before campaign commitments.

(Continued on page 3)

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.

(Continued from page 2)

Hinch said that Latham’s staff is unable to commit to dates in October because the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, hasn’t indicated yet whether Congress will recess as scheduled on Sept. 27.

Hinch also said that Latham’s staff has to decide which format any public campaign discussions should take. He mentioned town halls as options to forums or debates.

I’ve tried kindness, directness, professionalism, politeness, joking, nagging, teasing and even a bit of shaming in my efforts to have one of Ames’ new residents, Congressman Tom Latham, agree to a candidates’ forum in Ames in October.

Our proposal calls for use of the Ames City Council chamber at Ames City Hall. Friday nights or

weekend days look like the best times so far. We suggested the council chamber because it seats over 100 people, has technology that would allow live broadcast via public access cable TV, commercial or public TV and radio remote units, and video streaming. The sound system is excellent and there are nearby rooms to handle overflow traffic, if needed.

Once again, the League is ready to serve. Now it is up to a handful of Latham’s campaign staff whether we can.

Stay tuned, I'll send an update when I have an answer to our invitation.

Lauris Olson
President

NEWS ABOUT LWVIA MEETINGS

Presidents and Officers meeting Saturday, September 20, 2008

Location:
State Historical Building,
600 E. Locust St., Des Moines

Time:
10 AM to 3 PM

Please Contact Lauris Olson if you want more information or wish to attend

DO YOU WANT TO FIND MORE ABOUT THE LWVIA ?
GO TO OUR UPDATED WEBSITE AT
<http://www.lwvia.org>

Legislative Issues Briefing

When: Saturday October 11, 2008

10:00 AM – 2:30 PM, registration begins at 9:30.

Where: Newton Inn, 2000 West 18th Street South, Newton Iowa

Cost: \$10.00 for lunch

Join League members for an informative day learning about LWVIA 2009 lobby priorities for the Iowa Legislature. This year the priorities are: immigration, sentencing and correction reform, land conservation/flooding and predatory lending.

Reservations: Reservations are due October 1, to Joan Racki jracki69@aol.com, or 515- 270-6831 or 9008 Iltis Drive, Urbandale 50322. Reservations are needed in advance to order lunches.

NEWS FROM CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT CENTER FOR WOMEN AND POLITICS

Carly Fiorina discusses:

Women, Leadership and Power Tough Choices

Tuesday, September 16, 2008 7:30 pm, Sun Room, Memorial Union

Carly Fiorina, as the CEO of Hewlett Packard, was the first woman to lead a Fortune 20 company and was named the "Most Powerful Woman in Business" by *Fortune* magazine. She succeeded as an outsider – she was neither an engineer nor a man in an industry dominated by both. Her leadership at HP culminated in the hotly contested acquisition of Compaq, followed by an ambitious transformation project. Prior to joining HP, Fiorina spent nearly 20 years at AT&T and Lucent Technologies, where she directed Lucent’s IPO and subsequent spin-off from AT&T. She heads up Carly Fiorina Enterprises, which includes the Fiorina Foundation, Fiorina Group, and Fiorina Education and Outreach programs on such topics as leadership, globalization and corporate citizenship. The author of *Tough Choices: A Memoir*, Fiorina serves as John McCain’s Victory ’08 Chair, traveling the country and appearing frequently in the media to speak on behalf of the Republican Party presidential candidate.

**L W V B O O K G R O U P
2 0 0 8 - 2 0 0 9 S C H E D U L E**

September begins the gathering of the Book Group with the following schedule:

September 24 Things fall apart by Chinua Achebe. Marlene Weisshaar hostess, 1703 Pierce Ct.

October 29 The good German by Joseph Kannon. Frances Smith hostess, 2159 Country Club Blvd.

November 19 A woman in charge by Carl Bernstein. Jan Beran hostess, 304 24th Street.

December No meeting

January 28 Where does money go: your guided tour of the federal budget crisis by Scott Bittle & Jean Johnson. Randi Peters; and Free Lunch by David K. Johnson led by Barbara Gwiasda; Randi Peters hostess, 3217 Greenwood Rd.



February 25 1421: The year China discovered America by Gavin Menzies. Mary Richards hostess 3217 West Street.

March 25 Presidential courage: Brave leaders and how they changed America by Michael Beschloss. Nancy Brown hostess, 3614 Story Street.

April 22 Those who save us by Jenna Blum. Marion Weiss hostess, 2435 Hamilton Drive.

May 27 Letters from Nuremberg by Chris Dodd, led by Joyce Hertz; as hostess, 2803 Torrey Pines Cir.

Mark Jackson, city manager for Story City, reflects on his travel to Ukraine



This past April, at the suggestion of the Ames League of Women Voters, I had the privilege to travel to Ukraine and speak at a United Nations Conference on Public-Private Partnerships as they relate to alleviating poverty.

Ukraine, a country of 46 million and once part of the Soviet Union, gained independence in the early 1990's. The eastern part of the country tends to be tied more with Russia while the western half tends to be more European. Ukraine is progressing toward a market oriented economy and since 2000 has enjoyed strong economic growth, around 7.5 percent per year on average. But inflation is eroding these gains and the economic balance has not been even.

Overall poverty is at 28 percent and there is a growing disparity between urban affluence and rural poverty. Poverty is something new to them due to the

redistribution of resources as they transform to a market based economy.

At the time of my travel, Ukraine and Georgia were being considered for admission to NATO. Today, Georgia, a country of approximately 4.5 million, faces military conflict with Russia. Ukraine and Georgia have an emerging democracy where the people are experiencing new found freedoms such as free speech and democratic elections.

Ukraine is a country that over the centuries has been conquered, controlled, and dominated by other nations. The worst thing the United States and Western Europe can do is to control, dominate, and economically exploit them. The United States needs to be a symbol of ideas for Ukraine. There needs to be a picture of America far bigger and more profound than one of McDonalds and Nike.