



The Voter

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Ames, IA

Web-site: <http://www.ameslww.org>

November 2009

From the President

The League priorities most likely to move forward in the 2010 Iowa General Assembly are those that can save money, according to speakers at this year's state League issues briefing.

Therefore, it is likely sentencing reform and changes in the state's corrections policies— one of the Iowa League of Women Voter's current legislative priorities – will be addressed.

Eliminating exorbitant rates on payday loans, creating state penalties for hiring unauthorized workers, expanding the types of bottles covered by the returnable beverage container law and enacting campaign finance reform will get little, if any, attention outside of committees.

Legislators must trim close to \$1 billion dollars from the 2010-11 state budget and that is where they will focus their efforts, said almost every speaker who addressed about three dozen league members Oct. 24 at the Altoona Public Library.

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NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

The League of Women Voters November General Meeting is devoted to tremendously huge, complicated, and crucially important topics: **Energy Policy and Climate Change**. We are so fortunate to have local speakers who are recognized nationally for their expertise in these areas: Gene Takle, professor of Atmospheric Science and Agricultural Meteorology and Director of the ISU Climate Science Initiative, Bob Haug, Executive Director of the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities, and Anne Kimber, also of the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities.

The meeting will be held at **Northminster Presbyterian Church, Fireplace Room, 1416 20th Street, Ames, at 7:30 p.m.** It will include time for questions from the audience. Come, bring family and friends (and lug-a-mug for coffee or tea to help us be green).

The League of Women Voters of the United States has a position on energy policy as well as a fact sheet developed for use by local leagues, both of which are found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Submitted by Mary Richards

Mark Your Calendar for November and Beyond

November 19 **General Meeting**
Energy Policy and Climate Change
7:30 p.m.
Northminster Presbyterian Church
1416 20th Street

January **Ames Happening**
TBA
Look for more information at a later date.

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Rachel Scott of the Commission on the Status of Women said that the budget situation would take up so much of the legislative session that the commission was not going to suggest any new legislation this session. Instead, they are just hoping to get a two-year-old house bill out of committee. The bill requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for nursing mothers.

As for our stake in the sentencing and corrections debate, the state League position calls for: changing sentencing rules using the recommendations from the Criminal Code Reorganization Committee Report, moving to more community-based correction programs and more funding for treatment of “special needs offenders” such as those with mental health and substance abuse problems.

A speaker from the Iowa Association for Justice (formerly the Iowa Trial Lawyers Association) said that the best way to orchestrate changes would be creation of a permanent commission charged with continual review of sentencing practices.

One requiring immediate attention, he said, is the relationship between criminal and administrative penalties. Another is the elimination of “fake” sentences.

An example of the criminal-administrative penalty system is the automatic suspension of driving privileges for one year for someone who refuses to take a breath analyzer test, regardless of a subsequent acquittal on charges.

The mandatory minimum of a 25-year prison term for someone convicted of methamphetamine possession is often, he said, a “fake” sentence. Defendants who plead guilty, thus avoiding trial, automatically get a reduction of 1/3 of the sentence. Good behavior, cooperating with law enforcement officials on other cases, etc., also qualify for further reductions in the time served and most who are sentenced to 25 years only serve about 23 months. The problem, says the Iowa Association for Justice, is that the mandatory sentencing guidelines convey a great deal of power to district attorneys while penalizing defendants who want their day in court and decline to act as informants on other cases.

Our new lobbyist Amy Campbell, will be working to promote our positions on all our priorities, not just sentencing and corrections reform. And she wants our help.

Amy needs two to four “committee observers.” Your task would be to attend legislative committee meetings, when asked, while wearing a League of Women Voters button. You would not be required to speak.

The state board would really like Ames members to consider this opportunity for service due to our short commute to Des Moines. I add my plea to theirs. Getting legislator’s attention is always difficult, but this session, if we want legislator to address our issues, letters alone won’t do the trick. We have to show up.

Contact Amy at 515-554-5838 or amy@campbell-patterson.com to be put on the observer list.

*Lauris Olson
President*

National LWV position on Global Climate Change

Global climate change is one of the most serious threats to the environment, health and economy of our nation. Recent scientific studies show that global warming is already causing environmental changes that will have significant global economic and social impacts.

The League believes that now is the time to act on global climate change. We can reduce global warming pollution by using existing technologies to make power plants and factories more efficient, make cars go farther on a gallon of gasoline, and shift to cleaner technologies. Cities, states and individuals are already adopting many of these solutions, which also reduce our dependence on oil, reduce air pollution, and protect pristine places from oil drilling and mining. State and local initiatives are proving that answers exist.

Submitted by Mary Richards

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The United States Must Take Aggressive Action To Cut Its Greenhouse Gas Emissions To Stabilize Earth's Climate

The evidence is clear that human-induced climate change is underway.

The emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases—primarily by the burning of fossil fuels—has increased the blanket of heat-trapping gases in Earth's atmosphere. Global temperatures have risen approximately 0.8°C (1.4°F) above pre-industrial levels, and this small increase is already causing significant adverse effects. These effects—documented by the world's leading climate scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—include rising sea levels, intensified storms, higher global temperatures, and severe droughts and floods that are already having adverse impacts on human health, food supplies, and ecosystems, as well as national economies.

The United States has made a commitment to stabilize the climate.

The United States Senate ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, joining over 180 nations in a commitment to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

Prompt action is required to slow the build-up of greenhouse gases.

According to the IPCC, global emissions must peak and begin declining *before 2015*. There is strong scientific consensus that warming of more than 2°C (3.6°F) above pre-industrial levels will lead to irreversible damage to our planet. The pre-industrial concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere, expressed as CO₂-eq (CO₂ and other greenhouse gases and aerosols), was 280 parts per million (ppm). It was 375 ppm in 2005 and is increasing each year. We must start now to limit CO₂-eq below 450 ppm, adjusting the target periodically as necessary, to reflect our understanding of the rapidly evolving science of climate change. Eventual stabilization at even lower concentrations of CO₂-eq may be necessary.

The United States must adopt an aggressive trajectory for reducing its emissions.

The United States must stop the “Business as Usual” emissions of greenhouse gases and impose aggressive emission reductions starting in 2010. We support adoption by the U.S. of a firm, verifiable cap that reduces emissions at least 25% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050. Even with these aggressive reductions in the U.S., the global decrease in emissions may lag, as shown in the graphic, resulting in dangerous warming. Furthermore, part of the emitted CO₂ remains and accumulates in the atmosphere; thus, the atmospheric concentration will continue to increase until the global rate of removal exceeds the rate of release.

We have the capacity, responsibility and economic imperative to lead this effort internationally.

The U.S. has met great challenges before—such as World War II and space exploration. Since we are responsible for much of the increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases, we need to accept responsibility for being the leader in solving the global climate challenge. Our efforts will transform our way of life by creating a new clean-energy economy and will allow the U.S. to maintain its technological leadership.

Submitted by Mary Richards

2009—2010 Observer Corps

The board would like to say ‘thank you’ to the following individuals on our Observer Corps.

Last Name	First Name
Bintzen	Cheryl
Bohnenkamp	Jeanette
Brown	Nancy
Fuchs	Holly
Gwiasda	Barb
Hertz	Joyce
Hoffman	Judie
Jackson	Tom
Jackson	Judy
Manatt	Jackie
Marks	Nancy
McJimsey	Sandra
Munson	Barb
Patterson	Miriam
Prescott	Jeri
Prestemon	Dean
Shimp	Karen
Tait	Meg
Tait	John
Thompson	Marcia
Weisshaar	Marlene
Wilt	Maureen
Wirth	Sharon



Readings for Nov. and Dec. LWV Book Group

Meetings at 1:30 p.m. on 4th Wednesday each month

Nov. 18	<u>When the Rivers Run Dry</u> by Fred Pearce. Marlene Weisshaar, hostess, 1703 Pierce Ct.
Dec. 16	<u>This Child will be Great</u> by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Barbara Gwiasda, hostess, 3420 Eisenhower Ave.
Jan. 27	<u>Blood and Politics: The History of the Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream</u> by Leonard Zeskind. Randi Peters, hostess, 3127 Greenwood Rd.

Submitted by Marcia Thompson and Cheryl Binzen



League of Women Voters of Ames
Voter Editor: Renee Jerman

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.