



The Voter

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

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

September 2009

From the President

Our nonpartisan policy in practice.

The Ames League of Women Voters will be the sole sponsor of this year's city council candidates forum. The forum will mark the first time in at least several years that we have not partnered with the Ames Chamber of Commerce to present what many consider the "official forums" of the major local elective offices for Ames and Story County.

By my count, this is the fifth year that I have been involved with our Voter Services in some fashion. Working with the Chamber to produce these forums has been a positive experience and I think the leaders of both organizations have taken pride in the quality of our cooperative efforts to educate the voters.

Sure, there have been some logistic and format glitches. Some moderators were more popular than others. Some forum times and dates worked better for one organization than the other. What collaboration doesn't have a glitch from time to time? And for our part, I think sometimes we have been a bit too critical about the fine points.

(Continued on page 2)

GAZING INTO A CRYSTAL BALL: What will the United States health care system look like in years to come? Join us for the first general meeting of the LWVAmes year and get an organized overview of the possibilities:

Thursday, September 17, 2009

7:30 p.m. (coffee/tea at 7:00—*be green: lug-a-mug!*)
Northminster Presbyterian Church, 1416 20th Street

Topic: "Health Care Reform"

Review of LWVUS position (Selva Lehman)
Review of the many proposals in Congress (Dr. Selden Spencer)
Discussion (All of us)

It may seem that health care reform is such a moving target that it's impossible to know what's happening, but we promise you'll leave the meeting with a better understanding of what's being proposed, how those proposals will change (or not change) the current system, who wins and who loses, and how the League's position relates to all of this.

Join us—we guarantee a stimulating and informative evening!

Mark Your Calendar for September and Beyond

September 17	General Meeting Health Care 7:30 p.m. Northminster Presbyterian Church Fireplace Rm. 1416 20th Street
October 1	Board Meeting 5:30 p.m. Ames City Hall
October 17	General Meeting Water Quality 7:30 p.m. Northminster Presbyterian Church Fireplace Rm. 1416 20th Street
October 24	Fall Issues Workshop 10 a.m.—3 p.m. Altoona Public Library 700 8th St., SW Altoona
October 26	Ames City Council Candidate's forum 7 p.m. Ames City Council Chambers 515 Clark Ave.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meet the 2009-2010 Board	3
Observer Corps	4
Women Impacting ISU	4
LWVUS Nominating Committee	4
Book Club Meetings	5

(Continued from page 1) President

But the issue facing your board of directors at the Sept. 3 meeting wasn't about logistics or timing. It went to the heart of our principles, our history and our reputation. The topic was nonpartisanship.

A couple of the board members, one being I, had attended recent meetings or presentations where speakers representing the Chamber had directly called for a change in the makeup of the Ames City Council. Two more of our members had reported having similar experiences and we had also heard from a couple of non-League members.

Candidate names were not used, but the comments for change were specifically directed toward the two incumbents seeking another term on the council. How could we, the Ames League, go forward sponsoring a candidates forum with a partner who was vocalizing opposition for two of the candidates?

We decided we couldn't.

Prior to the meeting, I poured through some of the various manuals and handouts the national and state League boards have put out to help guide local leaders. I relied upon both hard-copy and Web page materials as I assembled a reference sheet for the Ames LWV board members. That night, I brought half-dozen pamphlets, books and CDs to the meeting in case we wanted to delve deeper into the philosophy behind our nonpartisan policy.

The materials were not needed. Our nonpartisan policy and the reason behind is firm and clear – we don't support or oppose candidates and we don't partner in candidate forums (and may other activities) with individuals or organizations that do.

The vote was unanimous. So is the board's hope that we will be able to cosponsor candidates forums with the Ames Chamber in the future. The communication I sent to Ames Chamber of Commerce president Dan Culhane on Monday specifically asked that we continue communication and collaboration whenever possible. The contents of the e-mail follow this column.

Contents of Sept. 7 communication to Ames Chamber of Commerce:

Sept. 7, 2009

Good Afternoon Dan,

This is a follow-up to our communication last week about the Ames League of Women Voters and Ames

Chamber of Commerce collaboration to organize and present candidates forums for the major elective offices in the Ames/Story County area.

The Ames League board met Thursday and the collaboration was one of the items on the agenda. As you and I previously discussed, the league was looking at two key areas – forum moderation and preservation of the League non-partisan policy.

We discussed the benefits of the collaboration effort for both our respective organizations and the community as a whole. We expressed our appreciation for Chamber staff's cooperative attitude and efforts, and their ideas for new ways to reach voters. We affirmed our desire to continue to work with the Chamber on voter education efforts, when possible.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to collaborate with you on the candidates forum for the Nov. 3 Ames City Council election.

The League of Women Voters of the United States prohibits any level of the league – national, state or local – from endorsing political candidates or for partnering with any organization that endorses political candidates. This policy is in force whether the endorsement occurs within the confines of the membership list or extends to the public arena.

At least two members of our board and a few of our general members have been at other meetings or presentations in the last six weeks where people representing the Chamber or its affiliates have directly advocated for a change in the makeup of the Ames city council. While candidate names have not been used, the Nov. 3 election includes incumbents, and our League board believes that these statements constitute opposition against one or more of the declared candidates.

I quote from sections of the President's Packet for State and Local Leaders:

"The choice made in 1920 to neither support nor oppose any political party or candidate for public office continues today to ensure that the League's voice is heard above the tumult of party politics. The nonpartisan policy is key to the LWV's reputation and adds strength to the League's position on issues. It makes possible wide acceptance of and participation in League voters service and other educational activities.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2) President

It enables the League to hold respected, thoughtful candidate forums in which all eligible candidates participate, to hold balanced forums, and to bring different or opposing views together for true dialogue and discussion...Each League's Board is responsible for adopting and carrying out the League's nonpartisan policy. The Board is also responsible for seeing that both its members and the public understand the league's nonpartisan policy...Establishing and maintaining a nonpartisan policy is one of the basic requirements to being a League in good standing."

As you can see, there is little room for negotiation or compromise here. Nor does our board feel there should be. We support and defend the Chamber's rights to govern itself and exercise free speech. It is just that in some instances, the League will not be able to partner with the Chamber (or any other organization involved in candidate endorsement activities).

We are more than eager to meet with you, Eve, the Chamber Government Affairs committee and at some point, even the Chamber board of directors itself, so the Chamber can learn more about the League, its policies, its history and its accomplishments and we can identify future collaboration projects.

Sincerely,

Lauris Olson
President, Ames League of Women Voters

We received a reply from Dan on Tuesday morning, denying any Chamber endorsement of candidates but wishing us success in our future endeavors. He said that the Chamber would produce its own forum for the city council candidates. He ended by also expressing interest for future collaborations.

If you have any comments or questions, please contact me or other members of the board.

NOT the League of Women Voters.

Protecting League principles and reputation is important at all levels. Iowa LWV president Myrna Loehrlein passed along this communication from Janis McMillen, our liaison with the National LWV board:

"There is a group called the League of American Voters which is trying to run an ad opposing health care reform on the national networks and both ABC and NBC will not run it because of factual questions. We've had a question or two from the public about this, and the LWV Health Care list posted a question by a Leaguer who saw the crawl on Fox news and thought it said League of Women Voters. This appears to be a new organization, affiliated with Americans for Tax Reform.

We are aware of this and keeping an eye on it. In the event some of your members see the ad, or hear about it, please assure them its not associated in any way with LWV!

2009-2010 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS (CON'T FROM AUGUST VOTER)



Meeting Planner Co-chair

Cheryl Binzen is in her second year as a member of the Ames LWV and first year on the Board as Meeting Planner Co-Chair with Mary Richards. She was involved with the Richfield MN LWV for six years from 1994 – 2000. Cheryl and her two daughters, Mira and Stephanie, own and operate Global Family Yoga™, a teacher certification program for people who want to teach yoga specifically to children and families.



Secretary

Bev Kruempel
As a long time LWV of Ames member, I've served in several capacities including

president from 1996-1998. I recently retired from teaching in the College of Human Sciences at ISU. I also enjoy being an election official."



Publicity Chair

Jan Beran, longtime LWV Ames member, is professor emerita from ISU where she taught History of Sport. She and her husband George have three children, six grandchildren and have been foster parents to many teens. Jan has held various LWV Ames positions and was LWVIA president 1995-97.

Observer Corps

Thanks to all who have agreed to help with the LWV Observer Corps this year. At this time, 15 members have volunteered to attend meetings of governing bodies and committees in Ames and Story County.

Observers are still needed for several groups, including the Ames School Board, the Ames Human Relations Committee, and the Story County Conservation Board. Observers are asked to commit to a minimum of four meetings, and substitutes will be available to help provide the flexibility needed to accommodate travel and work schedules.

If you are able to assist as an observer or substitute, please call Jean Prestemon (292-1652) or Marcia Thompson (292-4428). Your participation in this important work of the League is greatly appreciated.

Submitted by Marcia Thompson



Women Impacting ISU

The Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University is now accepting applications for the 2010 'Women Impacting ISU' calendar. The calendar was initiated in 2007 by the Catt Associates student leadership organization as a tribute to current students, faculty and staff.

Each year, 12 women from a variety of disciplines and diverse backgrounds are selected for the calendar based on their leadership and accomplishments that have positively impacted Iowa State. Contributions made in the classroom, through campus involvement or community relationships, and among students and professionals at ISU are considered. The calendar honors women currently employed or enrolled at ISU. Anyone, whether affiliated with ISU or not, may nominate a current student, faculty or staff member.

A ceremony to unveil the calendar and honor the participants will be held Dec. 9. The Catt Center will distribute 1,500 calendars.

A nomination form is available online at the Catt Center website: www.las.iastate.edu/cattcenter/documents/calendar_nomination_form.doc. Nominations are due to 309 Catt Hall by Friday, Sept. 18. For more information, contact the Center at 515-294-3181 cattcntr@iastate.edu.

Only a Month to Go!

A brief reminder from the LWVUS Nominating Committee that it's just over a month before nominations for the 2010-2012 LWVUS Board and Nominating Committee will close. It's members like you who provide the current Nominating Committee with the names of League leaders you think would be assets to leadership at the national level. The *For Members* area in the LWVUS web site has lots of information on what it means to serve our organization at the national level. There are also hard copy and on-line nomination forms. Take a look and think about nominating yourself or another League leader. The postmark deadline is September 30. The Nominating Committee wants to have the biggest pool of nominees possible from which to build the slate, and your help is crucial. Don't forget that LWV is US!

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sandy Powell

LWVUS Nominating Committee member

Readings for Sept. and Oct. LWV Book Group

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

- Sept. 23 Audacity of Hope by Barack Obama. Selva
Lehman, hostess, 4037 Fletcher Blvd.
- Oct. 28 Dead Aid by Dambria Moyo. Jan
Beran, hostess, 304 W. 24th Street

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.