President’s Column

2014 was another great year for our League. In addition to continuing to provide all of the events and services we are known for; we were recognized by State League for our community service in holding an informational forum on a proposed bond issue, and by National League for membership growth of over 20%. Many of you registered voters, worked as election officials, or planned or assisted in the many events we held during the year. You are the League!

Our abysmal voting rates: What can we do????

Several of us attended Mara Liasson’s public lecture on November 13. Reflecting on the recent election, she informed us that the word politics is Greek for “many blood-sucking insects.” It’s a funny line. However, what is not funny is that so many people – particularly so many young people – feel that way and use it as an excuse for not voting.

Overall in the nation, 37% of eligible voters voted. Local statistics were somewhat better – in Story County 51% of registered voters voted. (Caution: this compares apples to oranges.) And, as is becoming the trend, the lowest voting rates are among voters ages 18-35.

Frustrating . . . but what can we do about it? Well, for starters:

• We can continue to reach out to young voters and explain to them why voting matters.

• We can let them know how they can get reliable information on issues and candidates’ positions.

• We can explain our voting laws and process to them, so they don’t get frustrated and desert the voting process.

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It shouldn't have come as a surprise to me that the League has a thorough and well stated position on immigration, but I had forgotten how impressive and complete is our study, consensus, and position-taking process. The LWVUS immigration position began with a two year study (2006-2008) by 67 local Leagues based on a clearly defined scope, a long list of briefings, background papers, and neutral consensus questions. That is the gold standard for study leading to a position! Here is a brief excerpt from the results:

Immigration policies should:
• promote reunification of immediate families
• meet economic and employment needs of the US
• be responsive to those facing persecution or humanitarian crises
• provide for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas

To complement these goals we support federal policies to improve conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

In transition to a reformed system, the LWV supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the US to earn legal status.

The League supports federal payments to impacted communities to address costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

I encourage members to look at the complete position because it's very enlightening and not all that long. And if you have just a few more minutes look at the process by which we got there (google LWVUS study on immigration). I guarantee you'll be impressed!

-- Sue Koehrsen

WANTED!
C. C. Catt Award Nominations

Beginning in 1993 with honoree Helen LeBaron Hilton, the Ames League of Women Voters has annually presented the Carrie Chapman Catt award to a member of the local League who has demonstrated outstanding service to the Ames League and to the wider community. (See the web site: About Us for a complete list of award recipients.) So—who would you nominate?

Please give your suggestions to Mary Richards (708-3034; maryrich@isunet.net) by March 1.
NEW MEMBER

My husband, Joel and I were both raised on small farms; his near Kenton, Ohio and mine near Zearing, Iowa. Joel came to Ames 36 years ago to accept a professorial position at ISU in the Entomology Dept. I have lived in Ames for the past 41 years, and have retired from the Ames Public Schools where I worked for 29 years as an educational aide, media tech and office secretary. Joel and I are remarried (to each other😊) and between us have 5 grown children and 12 growing grandchildren. I became inspired to join the LWV when I read your signs in the July 4th parade, each sign addressed an issue close to my heart. I was truly tempted to trail your group down the parade route like an excited puppy. When I attended my first meeting in October, I was impressed by the passion, knowledge and empathy of this group and am hoping to become an active and engaged member.

— new member Becky Coats

Legislators Hear League Legislative Priorities

On November 11 seven League members: Jan Beran, Nancy Halvorson, Erv Klaas, Carolyn Klaus, Linda Murken, Mary Richards, and Deb Schildroth, met with four Story County State Legislators: Senator Jerry Behn and Representatives Rob Bacon, Dave Deyoe and Lisa Heddens, to present and discuss the LWVIA legislative priorities for the 2015 session.

Carolyn described our League’s experience in voter registration and why the League feels that on-line voter registration would benefit Iowa’s election system. Jan presented the League’s position that juveniles who have been trafficked for purposes of prostitution should by law always be treated as “children in need of assistance” rather than as “delinquents.” Mary urged the legislators to extend the curbs on pay-day lending begun by the last Legislature, and to reduce or eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenses.

Linda presented the League’s position against shackling pregnant prisoners and Nancy advocated in favor of fully funding victim services programs for victims of domestic violence. Erv described the League’s position on water quality and mentioned several steps the Legislature could take to improve Iowa’s water quality. Deb discussed the fluid situation in the state’s mental health system.

All attending legislators participated in lively discussion. For a summary of their views on each of these issues, contact Carol Alexander Phillips.
The Ames League was very active in registering students for the November election. It would not have happened without Ames member support and funds from the LWVIA.

During September and October, we registered over 130 voters at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge, Des Moines Area Community College in Boone and North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City. We also registered 281 voters on the Iowa State University campus. And we processed 54 absentee ballot request forms, which were sent to 26 different counties in the State of Iowa. Students who assisted at each site contributed greatly in engaging their fellow students as well as learning more about the political process.

One of the additional reasons for conducting these events was to learn lessons during a mid-term election that we can apply in the 2016 election.

Some of the things we learned:

1. Advance planning is very important. Involve faculty and student government in helping make decisions about best days, times and locations.

2. Choose a location with a high volume of traffic and turnover of students.

3. Publicize in advance. Student newspapers are good, but don’t stop there. Some schools can send out e-blasts to all students about upcoming activities. Coordinate with student government to use their many innovative ways of reaching out to students.

4. Train all volunteers (including students), not just in understanding the form and process, but also in motivating students to register (a.k.a. reeling them in).

5. Use knowledgeable site managers. Don’t let volunteers decide something is “probably okay.” We don’t want to cause confusion later in the process, for obvious reasons.

6. Develop a relationship with your County Auditors. It will smooth the way when you come to their office with hands full of voter registration forms for them to process.

7. Know the rules about where college students can vote (either at school address or at home address) and a sense of all the permutations possible.

More issues to think about for next time:

- Knowledge of candidates at all levels is very important. Many students say “Why should I vote? I don’t even know who’s running.”

- Not all County Auditors have viewable ballots on their websites. There is a statewide list of all candidates on the Secretary of State’s website, but it is cumbersome to use Maybe by 2016 all Iowa’s local leagues will be on Vote 411, which would ease the problem in the counties where leagues exist.

- All of us should be familiar with the Iowa Secretary of State’s website www.sos.iowa.gov. It has lots of good features: Am I Registered to Vote? Find Your Polling Place and much more.

- Students assume they can register online. It’s sad to have to disabuse them of this belief. Maybe by 2016 this won’t be a problem!*

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A special thank you to the following volunteers – the registration effort would not have been successful without your contribution of time and talent:

Sue Koehrsen  Linda Murken  Rebecca Hoeppner
Betty Baird  Barb Gwiasda  Jean Peterson
Jane Johnson  Jan Beran  Jeanette Bohnenkamp
Nancy Halverson  Deb Schildroth  Barb Brodie
David Haynes  Marilyn Haynes  Bev Kruempel
Cindy Paschen  Mary Anne Silence  Sandra McJimsey
Gloria Betcher  Nancy Marks  Marianne Chalstrom
Jean Prestemon

We are already looking forward to the next election and how the Ames League can work with the region's colleges, universities, and election officials to help instill in young voters a commitment to voting and to making democracy happen.

-- Carolyn Klaus

* Read LWVIA president Bonnie Pitz' and DeNora Getachew’s op ed advocating on-line voting in Iowa:
http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2014/10/10/bring-online-voter-registration-iowa/17006681/

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If you're new to the Ames LWV since February 2014, OR have never attended a new member coffee, please join us Saturday, February 14th at Northcrest Fireside Room from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m..

You'll have a chance to meet other new members and get acquainted with LWV Board members as they tell you about the League's activities and their Board portfolios. More details about this event will be sent out early in the new year.

Questions? Contact Barb Brodie - dbbrodie@msn.com, or Nancy Halvorson - mnhalvorson@msn.com

Prof. Todd Pettys of the University of Iowa gave an informative and well received talk to the Ames League November general meeting on the historical evolution of voting rights in the United States, the reasons for differences in voting laws among the states, and reasons for the current trend toward more restrictive voting laws in some states.
Stay informed about what’s happening in the Iowa Legislature! Ask your legislator questions about the issues that matter to you! Come join us in Ames City Council Chambers for our three scheduled Legislative Wake-ups:

- Saturday, Jan. 31
- Saturday, Feb. 28
- Saturday, Mar. 28

8:30-8:45 Breakfast treats and coffee.
8:45-10:00 Hear from and question our legislators

For more information, contact Legislative Co-Chairs, Carol Alexander Phillips, caphill@mchsi.com or Donna Elliott, donnaelliott@live.com We look forward to seeing you!

Come and bring a friend to hear the State of the Community from 7 to 9 pm on January 22 in the Council Chambers at the Ames City Hall.

Ames Mayor Ann Campbell, the chairs of the Story County Board of Supervisors and the Mary Greeley Medical Center Board of Trustees, and Miles Lackey, representing the Office of the President of ISU will be presenters for their respective government bodies.

Each speaker will review highlights of their entity’s activities during 2014, and look ahead to the challenges and opportunities presented in 2015.

Start the year off right by participating in the annual LWV program planning process. The Annual Program Planning meeting will be held (with desserts and coffee, 6:30 p.m., PEO Room, Ames Public Library, Thursday, Jan. 15

Bring your friends to hear Linda Hanson, the new director of Primary Health Care of Ames, on February 19th in the Rotary Room of the Ames Public Library. She will discuss this new community health care clinic that provides health care for the insured, the uninsured, and the under-insured. It also offers special programs for homeless and HIV clients. The PHC is located at 3510 Lincoln Way. It is an exciting addition to the other health care providers presently in Ames.

In the question-answer period that will follow each presentation, you will have a chance to ask questions about decisions and policies your local government has made or is contemplating. Be an active part of democracy!
Attend the Freedom Fund Banquet

Join other Ames Leaguers at the annual NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet Friday, Feb. 13, Scheman Bldg., ISU. Keynote speaker is ISU president Steven Leith. The cost of the banquet, $55, supports NAACP’s work. Contact Nancy Halvorson: 233-3219

Keep an eye on democracy—be part of the Observer Corps.

The Observer Corps needs YOU, either regularly, or once or twice a month, or as an occasional substitute, to sit in on one of these meetings: Story County Board of Supervisors, Ames School Board, or Ames City Council. Contact Nancy Marks for more information: 233-6953 or nancy.marks@me.com

Book Club Schedule

All meetings at 1:30 p.m. Please contact host if you’re attending

Jan 28, Host: Jeanette Bohnenkamp

“The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War”

by Stephen Kinzer (2013)

February 25, Host Randi Peters

“The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness”

by Michelle Alexander and Cornel West (2012)