



The Voter

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Johnson County, Iowa

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.



From the Board

This special issue of *The Voter* is dedicated to the series

**The United States Constitution & The Supreme Court:
Their impact on your daily life**

This series of community conversations exemplify how the League will study, educate and advocate issues in our mission to make democracy work.

A very special thank you goes to the speakers and panelist in this series who have so generously given their time, expertise and advice for these programs. Obviously without all of you there would not be a US Constitution series. Your participation is invaluable and very much appreciated.

A special thank you as well to Matthew Borger, our wonderful graphic designer who designed the posters for the series you will soon see around town.

The League of Women Voters Johnson County wishes to thank the following organizations for their help in publicizing the series and each event to enhance this community event: AAUW, ACLU Iowa, The Hawkeye Chapter of the ACLU, The Iowa City Public Library, Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature, The Iowa Women's Foundation, Kirkwood Community College, The League of Women Voters Cedar Rapids/Marion, University of Iowa Women's Archive and The Women's Resource and Action Center.

We also thank Humanities Iowa and The Hawkeye Chapter of the ACLU, Hills Bank and Trust Company and West Bank and Technographics and Old Brick for their financial support. We hope to increase the length of this list as the series continues.

We **especially** want to thank Dawn Suter and Rebecca Reiter for their inspiring vision of the project and tireless efforts to design and implement the project!

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**The United States Constitution and the Supreme Court
Their Impact on your daily life**

A series of community conversations

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County Education Fund is sponsoring a seven part series of community conversations that will explore how the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Supreme Court impact our daily lives.

Starting on September 16th, Todd Pettys, Associate Dean for Faculty and H. Blair and Joan V. White Chair in Civil Litigation, University of Iowa College of Law (UICL) will kick off the series with his presentation "The Mythology of the American Constitution" with an introduction by David McMahon, Associate Professor of History, Kirkwood Community College.

In October, Ben Stone, Executive Director of the Iowa ACLU, will discuss the Bill of Rights in his presentation entitled, "What's the cost if we don't get it right? Individual Freedom and the Constitution." The League's Vice President, Carol Spaziani will introduce Mr. Stone and the topic. The first two presentations are Co-Sponsored by the Iowa City Public Library's eponymous Carol Spaziani Intellectual Freedom Festival and will take place in Room A of the Library beginning at 7:00 PM. The presentations will be approximately 45 minutes to one hour in total with the remainder of the time dedicated to audience participation.

The series will continue from there using the constitution as a point of reference from which to understand and explore issues we as a society grapple with today. In November, Randall P. Bezanson, David H. Vernon Professor of Law, UICL, will moderate a panel that will look at money in politics by exploring the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, Citizens United v the Federal Election Commission. The audience will be invited to explore the impact this decision has and will have on political campaigns. Has it changed the face of our Democracy or is it simply fulfilling the Constitutional promise of free speech? Was this a decision by an activist court or a cool judicial interpretation of precedent? Does the Constitution declare corporations persons? Why does it take a constitutional Amendment to overturn the decision?

February brings special guest, Lawrence Goldstone to Iowa City. Mr. Goldstone's book, *Inherently Unequal, The Betrayal of Equal Rights by The Supreme Court, 1865-1903* explores how the U.S. Supreme Court's interpretation of the 13,14,15th amendments continued egregious inequality between the races after the Civil war, ending only with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, a century later. Mr. Goldstone will be interviewed and in conversation with Professor Angela Onwuachi-Willig from the University of Iowa College of Law. As one reviewer said, "Inherently Unequal is a valuable corrective for anyone who still believes that judges are above politics or that the constitution is a clear-cut charter of liberty."

March will celebrate Women's history month with a look at Women's issues where Professor Linda Kerber will present and lead a panel discussion with Ann Laquer Estin, Aliber Family Chair in Law, UICL and additional panel members yet to be confirmed.

The panel and audience will explore the milestones in Women's rights and key decisions that shaped women's lives from the right to vote to birth control to equal pay for equal work. We will learn about CEDAW - The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world. Is passage of CEDAW adequate to ensure equal rights for the next generation of women? Do we need to resurrect the Equal Rights Amendment? Why, when women have surpassed men in graduate degrees do we still earn 75 cents for every dollar they earn? What do we need to do to change that?

The Affordable Care Act will be discussed in April. We are still looking for a key presenter and panellists. Once in place, they will look at current legal decisions debating the Act's constitutionality. The current debate is centred on the breadth of the Commerce Clause. Is this really a debate about Presidential power? What are the benefits and limitations of the Affordable Care Act? Is additional legislation needed to fully reform the United States healthcare system? The Supreme Court may agree to hear arguments on the Act this year which may change the entire conversation, but it will be interesting.

In May, we look at immigration. How does the Constitution address immigration? As a nation of Immigrants, shouldn't immigration issues be settled? What are the rules for immigration into the U.S.? Are they workable? Is the Postville raid an example of a failed immigration system? Is the debate driven by an underlying question of States rights versus the Federal Government? What is driving the recent influx of immigrants from Mexico and South America? How is that influx impacting our economy and our communities? We have invitations out to several speakers and are pleased to announce that Robin Clark-Benet, University of Iowa Labor Center, has accepted our invitation to serve on the panel.

The League of Women Voters wants to extend our heartfelt thanks to the series presenters and panellist who are the heart of the effort and make it all possible.

The Constitution of the United States is a touchstone of our democracy, encapsulating our laws but also our social and political values in a time capsule, but one that is constantly opened and added to. When we hold the current social and political debates up against it, what guidance and wisdom can we glean from it? Does it draw a straight line to justice or does it waver, challenging us to find our own way.

These are the questions that this series explores as we as a community come together to chart our path. We hope you will join us.

Go to www.lwvjc.org for a complete schedule. All events are free and open to the public.

Schedule of Events

Please print and add these dates to your calendar. Please invite friends to the events and use face book and email to invite people you think might be interested. Audience participation is the key to the success of this and future events. Thanks!

September 16, 2011

"The Mythology of the American Constitution"

Professor Todd Pettys, University of Iowa College of Law
Introduction: David McMahon, Kirkwood Community College
Iowa City Public Library, 7 to 9 PM

October 11, 2011

"What's the Bill if We Don't Get it Right? Individual Freedom and the Constitution."

Ben Stone, Executive Director, ACLU Iowa
Introduction: Carol Spaziani, LWVJC Vice President
Iowa City Public Library, 7 to 9 PM

November 2, 2011

Citizens United v The Federal Elections Commission

Professor Randy Bezanson, University of Iowa College of Law
Panelists: Paul Iverson, University of Iowa Labor Center and Judith Pederson-Bern, Move to Amend
Coralville Public Library, 7 to 9 PM

February 9, 2012

Inherently Unequal: The betrayal of Equal Rights by the Supreme Court, 1865-1903

Lawrence Goldstone, Author
In discussion with Professor Angela Onwuachi-Willig, University of Iowa College of Law
Old Brick, 7 to 9 PM

March 1, 2012

Women's rights

Professor Linda Kerber, University of Iowa History Department
Panelists: Ann Laquer Estin, University of Iowa College of Law
Introduction: Dayna Ballantyne, Executive Director, Iowa Women's Foundation
Old Brick, 7 to 9 PM

April, 2012 *Immigration*

May 2012 *The Affordable Care Act, legal status and impact*

Updates to the series will be posted on our website at: www.lwvjc.org



"I am delighted to be part of the League of Women Voters' seven event series on the U.S. Constitution. People from across the political spectrum often fiercely insist that the Constitution supports their own core political positions and forecloses those of their opponents. Despite all of those references to the Constitution in political debates, surprisingly little attention is paid to the actual language of the Constitution itself. In my presentation on September 16, I want to talk about the text of the Constitution, about the challenges we face when trying to draw contemporary meaning out of that document, about the reasons why the Constitution's ambiguities might actually play a critical role in helping to bind a diverse citizenry together."

Professor Todd Pettys

September 16, 2011

"The Mythology of the American Constitution"

Professor Todd Pettys

Associate Dean for Faculty

H. Blair and Joan V. White Chair in Civil Litigation

University of Iowa College of Law

Introduction by:

David McMahon

Associate Professor of History

Kirkwood Community College

Location: **Iowa City Public Library**

7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Co-Sponsors:

Iowa City Public Library, Part of the Carol Spaziani Intellectual Freedom Festival and Kirkwood Community College.

Free and Open to the Public

Audience members will be encouraged to engage in conversation with both speakers after the approximately one hour formal presentations.

This is the first in a series of seven (7) presentations on the U.S. Constitution and Supreme Court Sponsored by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

Other events in Iowa City on Constitution Day

Marianne Mason, Federal Information Librarian at the University of Iowa has developed The Constitution and a Cuppa Joe over the last three years. The four coffee houses listed below each provide a free pocket constitution, courtesy of Representative Loeb sack, to patrons on Constitution Day, formally September 17th, but celebrated this year on Friday, September 16th. Stop by and grab a cuppa and a constitution.

JAMES MADISON
THE FATHER OF THE CONSTITUTION

U.S. CONSTITUTION DAY 2011
ANNUAL CELEBRATION

EVENTS
Friday, September 16, 2011 at noon
A reading of the Constitution by US Army Cadets
IMU Hubbard Commons

September 12-17, 2011 Specialty Treats!

Java House: Featuring the "Bill of Rights" by designating each brew station for each one of the first ten amendments to the Constitution

T-Spoons: Created a special latte that is the "perfect Union" of white chocolate, cherry, and blueberry. It's like a flag in a cup!

Capanna: Created a special gelato that speaks "red, white, and blue"

Fair Grounds: Recommends a cuppa the think drink, as one considers the meaning of "We the People"

FREE POCKET-SIZED CONSTITUTION
Throughout the week, **get your very own copy of the Constitution**, thanks to Representative Dave Loeb sack. Pocket-sized copies are available at the North Circulation Desk of the Main Library, Java House, T-Spoons, Capanna, and Fair Grounds. *while supplies last

DID YOU KNOW?*

- 1 The U.S. Constitution has 4,400 words. It is the oldest and shortest written Constitution of any major government in the world.
- 2 James Madison, "the Father of the Constitution," was the first to arrive in Philadelphia for the Constitutional Convention. He arrived in February, three months before the convention began, bearing the blueprint for the new Constitution.
- 3 Of the spelling errors in the Constitution, "Pensylvania" above the signers' names is the most glaring.
*www.constitutionfacts.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION
guides.lib.uiowa.edu/us_constitution
usconstitution.net
archives.gov
youtube.com/preamble

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this program, please contact the Office of the Provost in advance at 319-335-0256.

U OF IOWA OLD CAPITOL

There's also a reading of the Constitution by US Army Cadets, beginning at noon on Friday, September 16th. Stop by and support the effort to put the Constitution within the reach of all of us everyday citizens.