



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 President

The weather outside is finally winter, and conducive to seeking warmth, so let me share the “hot” topics for LWVJC.

Our Holiday Brunch was festive and thought provoking. We gathered in the Carrie Chatman Catt room and brainstormed on the image of how The League will be in 2020, the 100th anniversary? The 90th Anniversary Committee (aka, the event planners) took the responses and will publish a summary in our February VOTER.

The Regional Governance Committee sent representatives with a statement of support to Johnson County Board of Supervisors’ public hearing on the proposed property maintenance code. Let’s just say they met with “heated” discourse. See the article in this issue.

Please plan on joining our meetings with our congressional delegation: the Legislative Briefing where we share the priority issues of LWVIA for the 2011 legislative session (January 3, 2011), the Legislative Forums (last Saturday of January, February, March), and Lobby Day (February 15, 2011) when we visit the State Capitol.

The editorial pages continue to address campaign finance and incivility. As we embark on the 91st year, the League will continue to promote citizens’ discussions of the issues in civil and fact-based ways and fight for transparency, accountability, and disclosure in America’s elections.

Polly Horton

President

League of Women Voters of Johnson County

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Regional Governance Committee Johnson County's Proposed Property Maintenance Ordinance

Having approved a statement to be read in support of Johnson County's adoption of a Property Maintenance Ordinance, several board and regional governance committee members attended the public hearing on the issue held Dec. 9 at the Johnson County Health and Human Services Building, Administrative Board room. Opposition from rural Johnson County residents was anticipated. Prior organization on the part of the Farm Bureau was evident, and its president was the first to speak. Opponents showed up in force, packing the board room and the "overflow" room to capacity with several people standing in the back of the room and along the walls on the side. The overflow room allowed attendees to view the proceedings on a very small TV screen at the front of the room. To ask a question or speak you had to go into the already crowded Board room. We think this set up added tension as people felt excluded from a proceeding they felt very passionately about. We have recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the next meeting be held in a room that will accommodate all attendees in the same room.

Opposing speeches began about 6:45 P.M. and lasted until after 9 P.M. There seemed to be some consistency from the speakers opposing the ordinance that this was being imposed on them by residents of Iowa City who thought they knew better than the rural residents what was best for them. There was also a passionate statement about government intervention in the lives of rural Johnson County residents when government is already big enough, over taxing its citizens and not being effective in carrying out its current responsibilities. One speaker said that "This violates my basic human rights." Many in the audience seemed to agree with that premise based on audience response to the sentiment.

Carol Spaziani read the League's prepared statement and was clear that the League was not addressing the specifics of the ordinance as much as the idea of developing a mechanism for granting authority to the county to empower them to address health and safety issues that arise that affect residents of rural Johnson County. (The statement is available on our website and was published in the Press Citizen.) Persistent comments and booing from the audience while the statement was read caused Chairwoman Sally Stutsman, after repeated warnings, to threaten to close down

the proceedings unless the rules of common courtesy were followed.

The concern of some of the audience members in opposition was not without merit. The proposed ordinance is long and somewhat confusing and circular in explaining its many parts. To that end, County Planning and Zoning staff made a number of recommendations that provided clarity on key issues at the beginning of the meeting and the County Attorney's Office clearly stated that no ordinance could give anyone the authority to walk into your premises at will. That would exceed the U. S. Constitution and nobody in the country could pass, let alone enforce, a violation of civil rights. Supervisor Patrick Harney read a proposed change to the ordinance that would exempt all "farms" from the ordinance. The representative from the Farm Bureau supported Mr. Harney's proposed amendment. These recommendations are being taken under advisement by the Board of Supervisors.

In the course of the public meeting, it was also stated that the State enacted codes for both plumbing and electrical this year.

There may be some overlap between the state codes and the proposed county ordinance. We will ask for further clarification from planning and zoning as to how the county ordinance differs from state requirements.

The League will continue to support adoption of the ordinance with some modification but not a wholesale exclusion of "farms."

If you think safe living conditions including clean water, adequate sewage treatment, and livable housing should be enforceable throughout unincorporated Johnson County, we ask you to get involved in supporting this ordinance and to contact County Supervisors expressing your support. They are hearing from plenty of

Click below to read the referenced document:

[Proposed Property Management Ordinance](#)

[Minutes of the 12/09/10 Meeting](#)

[LWVJC Statement](#)

Submitted by: Dawn Suter



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Membership Report

Submitted by: Rebecca Reiter

This is year we gained 7 new local members and 3 new national members bringing our total membership to 96, 7 of whom are national members. National has asked local membership chairs to contact their national members and to recruit them locally.

Membership at the local level entitles members to be a state and national member and to receive information at all levels. We have had a good year in recruiting new members and I encourage everyone to make 2011 a better year. We all need to be involved in member recruitment.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County is an active and community involved League as evidenced from our reports in this and past Voters. Use the information in these Voters when you talk to others about the League. Past issues are at the website. Click on the link above.

90th Anniversary Committee- December Brunch

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County held our annual December brunch on Saturday, Dec. 4th, in the Carrie Chapman Catt room of the Coralville Marriott Hotel.

After a delicious brunch, Pat Jensen introduced the program and explained that this was the end of our 90th year anniversary celebration of the League. We looked back at our proud history at the December brunch a year ago, and have been working to understand that history in 2010. As such she gave us a short quiz on a few facts about the League's founding. Pat briefly went over the history of the League in these 90 years. It is obvious that the League was never static, always changing with

the times, and has always had new challenges to meet. With this history in mind, the thrust of the program was to think of the future of the League, and try to visualize what the League will or should look like in the year 2020, the 100th anniversary of our organization. We were divided into four groups with a designated leader and recorder for each group. Lively discussion ensued at each table over the following questions: *If the League could only carry out one of its purposes, what would it be? How can we be viable in the future? What will the League look like in 2020? What are the purposes of the League of Women Voters? What are our strengths and our weaknesses?*

What kind of impact do we have on the greater community? What does the 2020 membership look like? How many members do we have? What types of members will be our leaders? Participants were encouraged to be creative and "think outside the box". At the end of the discussions, the recorders shared with everyone the thoughts of their group. The recorders, who were 90th anniversary committee members, will meet with Pat Jensen in January and consolidate the answers and share these thoughts with our membership as our visions for the future.

Submitted by: Gaylen Wobeter



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Voter Services- 2011 Legislative Forums

Submitted by Barbara Beaumont

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County legislative forums will again be held in 2011. The first will be held Saturday, January 29th at Emma Harvat Hall in the Iowa City Civic Center, from 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. The other forums are February 26th in the Coralville City Council Chambers, and March 26th in the North Liberty City Council Chambers. All the legislative forums will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will be broadcast live on the respective City TV Channel. The forums provide an opportunity for dialogue between the legislators and their constituents in John-

son County. Senators Joe Bolkcom, Robert Dvorsky, James Hahn and Sandra Greiner, and Representatives Nate Willems, Jarad Klein, David Jacoby, Jeff Kaufmann, Vicki Lensing, and Mary Mascher have been invited. The legislators present five-minute summaries of critical issues before their respective houses that are of particular interest to them. The remainder of the forum is devoted to public comments and questions, beginning with questions from the co-sponsors. The microphone is then opened to members of the audience for questions.

Voter Services- 2011 Lobby Day in Des Moines

February 15, 2011, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Calvary Baptist Church (606 E. 9th Street, Des Moines, IA)



Lobby Day 2010

- 9:30 AM Coffee and Reception
- 10:00 AM Briefing on League Priorities from our Lobbyists
Amy Campbell & Craig Patterson
- 11:00 AM Break into teams, head to Capitol to lobby
- Noon Lunch on your own with your legislators
- 1:00 PM Lobby
- 2:30 PM Debriefing (back at Calvary)

This year we will be dividing up into teams and asking local league members to lobby their legislators as well as a few other "VIP" lawmakers that may or may not be in their area of the state. Every legislator needs to hear about League Priorities, and understand why they are important to their constituents. Come in for the briefing, get your assignments, and head up to the Capitol!

LWVJC will arrange lunch with Legislators. We will also arrange a carpool to make the trip to Des Moines. Please email us at JCLWVoters@gmail.com if you are attending and if you want to carpool.



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Voter Services- Legislators Briefing—Iowa City

Submitted by Dawn

The League's annual briefing of our state legislative priorities to the Congressional delegation from Johnson County will be held on **Monday, January 3rd at 5:30 PM at the Brown Bottle Restaurant.** Pizza and soft drinks will be provided with a cash bar available.

The legislative priorities briefing not only provides League members an opportunity to delve into the League of Women Voters Iowa's top legislative priorities, it also affords the opportunity for a meaningful discussion with our Legislators on their positions on these issues and a chance to better understand the legislative process, warts and all.

The League's top three priorities were outlined in detail in last month's *Voter*, and posted on our website. They are:

- Limiting interest rates on payday loans to no more than 36%; Restructure Iowa's state mental health system and provide the resources needed to prevent more costly care, and support expanding Iowa's mental health parity law to include all diagnosed mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders;*
- Restructure Iowa's state mental health system and provide the resources needed to prevent more costly care, and support expanding Iowa's mental health parity law to include all diagnosed mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders.*
- Slowing the growth of Iowa's prison population and address the needs of the growing number of substance abusers and persons with mental illness entering our correctional system.*

Other issues that the LWVIA is working on include strengthening Iowa's environmental programs, defending the current redistricting process, preserving the merit selection and retention system for judges, campaign financing and election reforms that move toward a transparent publicly-financed election system, enactment of the national health care reform in a manner that is coordinated, transparent and encourages public participation and immigration reform.

More detail is available at LWVJC.org and LWVIA.org.

Take a couple of minutes to think about these issues and issues that are important to **YOU** that aren't in the top three. Consider participating in our Program Planning in February where members can propose an issue and plan of action for advocacy for that issue and get League support to move it forward. Is campaign finance reform at the top of your list? Put it at the top of ours with your ideas for advancing it!!

By attending our local briefing you will have all the information you need to travel to Des Moines on Lobby day, February 15th, and lobby for League issues to elected officials from across the state.



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Regional Governance Report

Submitted by Rebecca Reiter

The Regional Governance Committee (RGC) continues to be very active; studying water/waste water issues in Johnson County (Water subcommittee), keeping informed about Iowa City's process of formulating an affordable housing location policy and on December 9th on behalf of the LWVJC Board presented a statement supporting a county property management ordinance at a public hearing held by the Johnson County Board of Supervisors.

We continue to monitor the issues surrounding the new Joint Emergency Communications Center and will continue to make the League's views known regarding the Johnson County Council of Governments (JCCOG) Long Range Multi-Modal Transportation Plan.

Our next RGC meeting will be Wednesday, January 12th at 2pm at Rebecca Reiter's home, 265 Highland Drive in University Heights. All are welcome!

Other meetings of interest are:

JCCOG meeting -Dec 15th at 4 pm in the Coralville City Hall..

Joint Cities/County/School District meeting -Feb. 23 at 4:00 PM in the Johnson County Health and Human Services Bldg. (All local government entities in the County will be invited to this)