



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 League of Women Voters Johnson County is in our 91st year. Our Board of Directors has continued to work this year to find alternative ways of carrying out the league's work. We are trying to reach beyond the traditional "league way", while at the same time maintaining it.

In July, our exhibit "Making Democracy Work" recognizing the activities and achievements of the Johnson – Linn County Corridor Leagues was introduced with a Heritage Reception at the History Center in Cedar Rapids. In September the exhibit moved to the Johnson County Historical Society, where we hosted a reception for Elected Officials. This year's reception introduced the option for Elected Officials to present a brief "State of" address to the group.

In October the LWVJC held forums for candidates running for the Iowa House and Senate from Johnson County. The League also co-sponsored a forum on the "21 Only" Ordinance with the Hawkeye Chapter of American Civil Liberties Union. LWVJC sponsored two forums on the process that Iowa uses for selecting and retaining judges, working with Iowans for Fair and Impartial courts and the Citizen Lawyer Program at the University of Iowa.

Our Holiday Brunch in December 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. Also in December, 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. Carol Spaziani reported "persistent comments and booing from the audience while the statement was read."

We started the New Year 2011 with our local Legislative Briefing on January 3 in the back room of the Brown Bottle where we shared the priority issues of LWVIA with our congressional delegates. We returned to this room in February for Program Planning, to discuss issues of concern to members and ideas for how League should undertake, endorse, or act on the issues.

We have hosted legislative forums on the third Saturday of January, February, March and the first Saturday of May. The forums provide an opportunity for dialogue between the legislators and their constituents in Johnson County. I look forward to seeing all of you at our Annual Meeting on May 4, 2011 at the Clarion Highlander. Thanks again to all of you who have made this a successful year!

PLEASE BRING THIS COPY OF THE VOTER TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING ON MAY 4, 2011 at the Clarion Highlander 2525 N. Dodge St. Iowa City

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**LWVJC is invited to Iowa N.E.W. Leadership Keynote Reception & Address
Thursday, May 26, 2011 from 5pm-7pm in University of Iowa's Old Capitol Museum**

Join us at University of Iowa's Old Capitol Museum to mingle with the N.E.W. Leadership participants. The reception begins at 5pm and the address from Joy Corning, 44th lieutenant Governor of Iowa, will begin at 6pm. This event is open to the public as we hope that you bring many members from the LWVJC!

What is Iowa N.E.W. Leadership?

Iowa N.E.W. Leadership is an intensive 5-day residential institute designed to empower women across the political spectrum and increase the participation of underrepresented groups in all sectors of public leadership. The Institute experience is built around a challenging curriculum that develops knowledge and skill in key areas, **including**: strategic communication, policy analysis, philanthropy, negotiation, community development, professional sustainability, relationship-building, productive engagement with difference, conflict and collaboration. Developed by the *Center for American Women and Politics* at Rutgers University in 1991, the NEW Leadership™ network currently includes 21 colleges and universities serving women in 25 states. The University of Iowa joined in 2007 and will hold its fourth Summer Institute **May 23 – 27, 2011**.

LWVIA State Convention – June 4, 2011

The League of Women Voters can send 8 delegates to the State Convention. Are you interested in attending? We will car-pool. Contact Polly Horton (pollyshorton@aol.com)

Saturday, June 4, 2011

Best Western Long Branch and Conference Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Janis McMillan, elected representative to LWVUS Board of Directors, will report on national level.

Tim O'Brien, LWVUS staff will speak on Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) battles across the country.

Deb Thomas, M.D., current president of Metro Des Moines League, will speak on her recent experience representing LWVUS at the United Nations Conference in Australia.



ISU Catt Center Sponsoring Ready to Run™: Campaign Training for Women on April 3

AMES, Iowa -- Women have made notable progress politically over the last two years. California Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D) became the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives. Hillary Clinton made a serious run at the Democratic presidential nomination. And Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin became the first Republican vice-presidential candidate.

But Iowa continues to lag in terms of advancement for women in politics.

"Iowa is one of two states that have never elected a female governor or sent a woman to Congress, with Mississippi being the other," said Dianne Bystrom, director of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University. "Iowa has also dropped to 28th place in terms of women in the state legislature, with women making up 22.7 percent of the Iowa legislature. So clearly, we have some work to do."

That's why the Carrie Chapman Catt Center and the League of Women Voters of Ames, Iowa, are once again sponsoring Ready to Run Iowa: Campaign Training for Women, on Friday, April 3. The workshop -- which attracted some 45 women in June 2007 and is designed for anyone interested in running for elected office, serving on public boards or commissions, or working on a campaign -- will take place from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Scheman Building at the Iowa State Center in Ames.

"The workshop presents a unique opportunity for potential candidates to hear directly from prominent elected and appointed political leaders, campaign consultants and party officials about how to literally get ready to run," said Bystrom. "It offers two tracks -- one for those who have made the decision to run for office and one for those who want to learn more about getting involved politically -- as well as joint sessions on taking a risk, message development and fund raising."

Political leaders who will participate include: State Representatives Lisa Heddens (D-Ames), Renee Schulte (R-Cedar Rapids), Phyllis Thede (D-Bettendorf), Linda Upmeyer (R-Garner), and Beth Wessel-Kroeschell (D-Ames); Iowa City Mayor Regenia Bailey (D); former lieutenant governors Sally Pederson and Jo Ann Zimmerman; and former Republican state representatives Jim Kurtenbach and Tami Wiencek.

Arnie Arnesen -- a talk radio host and former member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives who was a candidate for the U.S. Congress and the state's governor respectively -- will deliver the morning keynote, titled "Stepping Up, Jumping In, Taking a Risk." The luncheon keynote will be given by campaign consultant Liz Chadderdon, president, The Chadderdon Group, and will focus on message development and media relations. The afternoon keynote, "Fund Raising for Success," will be led by one of Iowa's leading political fund-raisers Nicole Schlinger, president of Capital Resources Inc./Campaign Headquarters.

Some topics that will be covered include launching your campaign, laying the groundwork for public life, navigating Iowa's political parties as a potential candidate, and navigating the routes to public office.

Registration is available [online](#) and will cost \$75 before March 28 and \$100 after that date. The fee includes all sessions and training materials; breakfast, lunch and afternoon refreshments; workshop notebook; and campaign training manual.

Through the support of donors, including gold-level sponsor Mediacom Communications Corporation, scholarships of up to \$50 a person are available to Ready to Run Iowa participants. These subsidies and scholarships are designed to offset a portion of travel expenses, hotel accommodations and/or registration fees. Participants need to request a travel scholarship and/or registration subsidy on their registration form and pay the full \$75 tuition. Travel scholarships and registration subsidies for up to \$50 per person will be refunded following their participation in the workshop.

Ready to Run™ was established by the Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Almost a quarter of the women in New Jersey's legislature have now attended Ready to Run. When the program started in 1998, the state ranked in the bottom third of all states for the proportion of women in its legislature. New Jersey now ranks 12th.

Additional information may be obtained at <http://www.las.iastate.edu/CattCenter/readytorun.shtml>, or by contacting the Catt Center at (515) 294-3181 [begin_of_the_skype_highlighting \(515\) 294-3181 end_of_the_skype_highlighting, or cattcntr@iastate.edu](mailto:cattcntr@iastate.edu).

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ANNUAL DINNER MEETING MAY 4TH

The League will continue its goal of education and advocacy of the Iowa Judicial System at our dinner meeting at May 4th by featuring Angela Onwuachi-Willig as our speaker. Onwuachi-Willig was one of nine finalists for the three vacancies on the Iowa Supreme Court. She was the only woman, and the only person of color on the short list of nominees. Gov. Brandstad did not select her for the court.

Onwuachi-Willig is a Professor of Law and the Charles M. and Marion J. Kierscht Scholar at the U. of Iowa. Her research and teaching interests include family law, employment discrimination, race and the law, feminist legal theory and evidence. For a more complete biography check her web site at the U of I College of Law.



The May 4th meeting will be held in the West Ball Room at the Clarion Highlander on North Dodge St. The evening will commence with social hour at 5:00, followed by the annual meeting at 5:30, dinner at 6:00 and at 7:00 our featured speaker. The dinner is \$23.00 payable to our treasured Allie Panther, 308 1/2 Dubuque St., Iowa City, 52245. Make checks payable to the LWVJC. Please return the following form to Allie before April 29th with your Choice of entre

Orange Roughie 2. Pork Loin w/chasseur sauce 3. Chicken Marsala

DIRECTIONS TO THE CLARION HIGHLANDER; GOING NORTH ON HWY 1 OR DODGE ST. TAKE THE FIRST RIGHT AFTER CROSSING I 80 AND THIS WILL LEAD TO THE HIGHLANDER

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Public Policy Positions—2010-2011

By Mary Ann Bradford

JOHNSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The League of Women Voters believes that good government for Johnson County should be accessible, goal-directive, cost effective and proactive. Elected county officials must exercise leadership, communicate openly, and be able to compromise. They must recognize the county's changing demographics, need for increased services, and have a coordinated vision for the future.

Home Rule

The League of Women Voters supports a Home Rule Charter for Johnson County. The process of developing a home rule charter will provide the opportunity for a systematic examination of the capabilities of county government. Any commission in charge of designing such a charter for Johnson County should strongly consider incorporating provisions in the charter which foster political leadership, professional management, and reorganization based on the functions performed.

Absent a Home Rule charter, the county's leaders should continue to improve county government in the areas of planning and goal setting, management, and citizen participation and communication.

Planning and Goal Setting

The county's planning---the land use plan, the North Corridor plan, the five-year plan, and strategic planning by the Board of Supervisors---should continue with a focus on setting goals, prioritizing courses of action, and developing implementation and financing strategies. Such planning must include mechanisms for review and official involvement of the county's citizens and local governmental entities.

Management

The League of Women Voters believes that to continue improvement of the management of county government, the following should be done: an annual review and update of basic goals and priorities; the hiring of professional staff; continuation of interdepartmental cooperation; ongoing orientation and continuing education for all employees; and continued emphasis on technology planning, development and training.

Citizen Participation and Communication

The League believes it is incumbent upon Johnson County government to increase citizen's understanding of and participation in county government. We encourage the county to: appoint diverse and representative citizens to boards and commissions; establish uniform county office hours and schedule county meetings that are accessible to the working public; designate a county information officer; and continue to videotape board meetings and distribute tapes to all Johnson County cable companies, public access and government channels. (Study adopted in 1995; position reached in 1996 and updated in 1998 and 2001.)

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT [continued on Next Page]

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PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS [CONTINUED]

The League of Women Voters supports the improvement of regional cooperation in the delivery of local government services within Johnson County. The current mechanisms in place to aid the corporation and coordination of intergovernmental and regional issues are neither adequate nor adequately utilized. Elected officials and citizens need to 1) make better use of the mechanisms available, and 2) find other avenues to pursue greater and more effective intergovernmental coordination.

The League will support measures that meet this goal including encouraging and participating in the establishment of a Charter Commission for Johnson County which would include representatives of the larger, contiguous cities. (Study adopted in 2001; positions reached in 2002.)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive Planning

The League supports community planning for all governments in Johnson County and coordination of these plans among jurisdictions and school districts. Comprehensive planning should include:

- Protection and preservation of the natural environment, parks and open spaces
- Efficient use of land and services
- Adequate housing for various needs
- A transportation system that includes safe and orderly traffic patterns, public transit, and pedestrian and bicycle trails
- Preservation of neighborhoods
- Buffer areas between residential and nonresidential zones
- Adequate infrastructure including quality water supply, waste water treatment of storm water disposal
- Shared use of neighborhood parks, recreation facilities and schools
- Public safety, including police, fire, ambulance and jails
- Excellent well-funded schools

(Position reached in 1970; updated in 2001)

Economic Planning/Development

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County believes that economic development in the greater Johnson County area should be a cooperative venture between all governmental entities and the private sector. The League encourages local governments to continue funding for economic development and for organizations such as the Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD). We also support the ongoing coordinated multi-county planning.

The entire community needs to maintain an infrastructure adequate to attract future economic development in the area. Important to future development are:

- Open responsive local governments that provide their citizens with excellent public services. [Continued]

· PUBLIC POICY POSITIONS [CONTINUED]

Sensitive integration and preservation of the area’s natural resources;

· Effective zoning, design control, and building codes;

· A wide range of cultural and recreational opportunities;

· Major academic institutions that contribute education and research to the creation of businesses and jobs. (Study adopted in 1985; position reached in 1986; updated in 2003)

HOUSING

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County believes that all individuals and families should have the opportunity for equal access to housing without discrimination and to a decent house and suitable living environment.

‘The League of Women Voters supports programs, legislation, regulations, and planning that expand home ownership opportunities at various prices and locations, create and maintain an adequate supply of sound, affordable rental housing; improve housing stock by promoting housing conservation and rehabilitation, and coordinate housing efforts between governments.

It is the responsibility of both the public and private sectors in Johnson County to find solutions to the problems of providing affordable housing in the area. Such efforts should involve all local governments, including county government, in the housing market area. **(See the LWV of the United States positions on housing criteria in *Impact on Issues.*)** (Study adopted in 1990; position reached in 1992.)

IOWA CITY GOVERNMENT

Council-Manager Form of Government.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a council-manager form of government for Iowa City. *(Position reached in 1949; updated in 1972 and 983)*

Home Rule

The League supports the concept of a home rule charter for Iowa City and the specific charter

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Rebecca Reiter

Our Per Member Payment (PMP) report on February 1, 2011 was 99 members broken down into these categories:

Individual members: 58

Household members: 27

National members: 7

Honorary (50 year) members: 2

Student members: 5

National has eliminated the national membership category, requiring previous national members to join locally. As of this date, April 6, 2011, , no national members have rejoined as local members. Two student members have moved out of state, bringing our current total to 90 members.

This past year we were fairly successful in recruiting new members with 8 new local members.

LEAGUES LONG HISTORY WITH IOWA'S CONSTITUTION By Pat Jensen

The January-February, 1968, LWV of Iowa VOTER announced a series of local League area meetings to kick off an OPERATION RATIFICATION campaign to push its support for five proposed amendments to the state's constitution – municipal home rule, item veto, annual legislative sessions, apportionment, and legislative compensation. The Iowa League had earlier been successful in 1962, along with other groups and individuals, in pushing for an amendment to Iowa's Constitution calling for merit selection of the state's judges.

The LWVIA began studying the state constitution in 1955. Over the next seven years, the League studied reapportionment, and the judicial, executive and legislative branches of government. In the intervening years the League has supported, and opposed, numerous efforts and proposals to amend the constitution. The latest advocacy was last fall when we opposed the successful effort to remove three Iowa Supreme Court justices from office by those who objected to the Court's unanimous ruling on permitting same-sex marriage.

The purpose of merit selection is to free judges from overt political influence, thus promoting a fair and impartial judiciary. It has worked in Iowa for 50 years, and worked well. On January 11, 2011, a *New York Times* editorial said, "For more than 200 years, no state or federal judge has been impeached to punish a judicial opinion – a record that has helped preserve the fair functioning of the courts". But, in Iowa, a group backed by outside funding and wanting the court to respond to their wishes, is trying to bring down the state's much admired judicial system. The League of Women Voters vows to support one of the nation's finest judiciaries and to help turn back the assault on the Iowa Supreme Court.

Those five amendments referred to earlier were added to the constitution in November of 1968. In addition to these five and the 1962 amendment calling for merit selection of judges, the League also has supported constitutional amendments for: constitutional convention proposals to be submitted to voters for ratification (ratified 1964); single-member legislative districts (ratified 1970); four-year terms for governor and lieutenant governor (1972); provision for removal of unfit judges (by the Supreme Court for just cause, 1972); repeal of prohibition against lotteries (1972); legislative power to call itself into special session (1974); repeal of allocation of county fines to school districts or libraries (1974); county home rule (1978); election of governor and lieutenant governor as a team (1988); and, *finally*, a state Equal Rights Amendment (1998).

The LWVIA has consistently opposed the Taxpayers' Rights Amendment (also known as the Stanley Amendment) on the basis it would severely limit revenue growth and spending for all levels of government – school, city, county and state.

The LWVIA position on the constitution under which action is taken reads:

The Constitution of Iowa should guarantee protection of people in their rights, delineate the framework of state government, and provide for only major concerns of enduring importance. A good constitution should:

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LEAGUE'S LONG HISTORY WITH IOWA'S CONSTITUTION [Continued]

Assure separation and balance among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, clarifying lines of authority and responsibility;

Leave procedural and financial specifics to statutory law;

Be stated in broad terms to provide for adaptation to changing conditions;

Be consistent throughout;

Avoid conflict with the federal constitution or law; and

Be free of deadwood, reasonably concise, and easy to understand.

As the April issue of the LWVJC VOTER announced, the League will continue its goal of advocacy and education on Iowa's Judicial System on May 4, when Professor of Law Angela Onwuachi-Willig will speak at the Annual Meeting. Prof. Onwuachi-Willig was one of nine finalists for the three vacancies on the Supreme Court this year.

(A personal note: My first experience in advocating for a League issue was in 1962, when the League of Women Voters of Iowa was pushing for the constitutional amendment calling for merit selection of the state's judges. I was a member of the Des Moines LWV at the time and, as I recall, a coalition of supporters of the amendment had a campaign office there. I was one of many volunteers, answering the phone, making calls, folding and stuffing mail, etc. I was obviously overjoyed when the issue was passed! PAT JENSEN)

U.S. CONSTITUTION SERIES By Dawn Suter, Chair , and Rebecca Reiter

LWVJC Board members, Dawn Suter and Rebecca Reiter, are working on a new project for the League. They are planning a series of lectures and panel discussions on the U.S. Constitution with the overall goal being to make the constitution and the final arbiter of its meaning, the U. S. Supreme Court, accessible to citizens. The approach is to have discussions with expert speakers and panels in several disciplines talk about issues of concern to the public and the League in particular such as the recent Supreme Court decision on corporate campaign financing, the right to privacy, gun control and religious freedom to name a few examples.

Several organizations have been contacted to ask for help with this ambitious project.

Currently, The University of Iowa law school has agreed to work with the League and provide some of the speakers. The Iowa City Public Library will host the first two presentations. The first will be in September on or near Constitution Day with a speaker giving an overview of the U.S. constitution. In October, Ben Stone, Executive Director of the ACLU of Iowa, has been asked to speak on the Bill of Rights as part of the ICPL's annual Carol Spaziani Intellectual Freedom Festival. Requests have been made to Kirkwood Community College faculty for their help with the Constitution Day celebration.

This project has the great potential for doing what the League does best: informing and educating citizens about our government, how it works and why this is important to everyone. We hope that ALL League members will be enthusiastic and active participants in these events in the coming months.

The League of Women Voters of Iowa should undertake a study and support of the Iowa Law on “Smart Planning” and the Recommendations of the Iowa Smart Planning Task Force to see how widely and well they are being implemented.

BY CAROL SPAZIANI AND PAT JENSEN

Coming out of our program planning session in February, our delegates to State Convention will be recommending to the State Board that they advocate in support of the Iowa law on “Smart Planning” including reviewing the recommendations of the Iowa Smart Planning Task Force to see how widely and well they are being implemented. LWVIA has positions on “Local Government” as well as land use which this law greatly strengthens if well carried out.

SF2389, signed into Iowa law April 26, 2010, established Smart Planning Principles to guide planning and decision-making, provide guidance for local and regional comprehensive planning, and establish a Smart Planning Task Force. The law did not mandate that localities develop comprehensive plans or change the ones already in effect. But new ones developed or amended using the guidelines must **consider** using the smart planning principles and must address catastrophic flood prevention and mitigation. And, if they do, become eligible for enhanced state planning assistance and grants.

The Smart Planning Principles: Collaboration; efficiency, transparency and consistency; clean, renewable and efficient energy; occupational diversity; revitalization; housing diversity; community character; natural resources and agricultural protection; sustainable design; transportation diversity.

The Smart Planning Task Force issued its final report and recommendations in November, 2010. These recommendations lay out a system to support local governments

As they apply the principles of Smart Planning. They include a statewide GIS system, integration of the principles into state investment and decision-making process, designation of Councils of Governments to complete regional smart plans, establish financial and technical incentives for local governments, correlate regional plans with watershed plans, and make the definition of “local comprehensive plan” uniform in the Iowa Code.

This represents the first time in Iowa that local governments and regions are being encouraged to develop comprehensive plans. This effort should be monitored as it develops and its implementation supported.

**THE FOURTH AND FINAL LEGISLATIVE FORUM IS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, MAY 5TH
AT THE IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY ROOM A FROM 1:00-3:00 PM
PLEASE NOTE THE TIME CHANGE !!!!!**

VOTER SERVICES 2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT By DAWN SUTER

The LWVJC partnered with IowaPolitics.com, Gazette Communications and Mediacom to present a primary forum for Democratic U.S. Senate Candidates Roxanne Conlin, Tom Fiegen and Bob Krause on May 27th, 2010 at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids. The forum was sparsely attended but was taped and broadcast statewide on Mediacom Channel 21. The forum represented the only public debate between these candidates in Eastern Iowa.

Political activity picked up again in the fall and the League partnered with a number of groups to fulfill our mission of Making Democracy Work. We worked with the Hawkeye Chapter of the ACLU and co-sponsored a debate on the contentious "21 only" ordinance in Iowa City. The Iowa City City Council passed an ordinance that went into effect on June 1, 2010 that said that 19 and 20 year olds could not be in bars after 10 P.M. The vote in the general election was a public referendum to determine if the ordinance should be overturned. The public voted, helped by the information presented at the forum, to retain the ordinance by a 52/48 result.

Judicial selection and retention gained widespread attention as a result of the Iowa Supreme Court decision in *Varnum v Brien* which decided the question if a state statute limiting civil marriage to a union between a man and a woman violated the Iowa Constitution. The Court ruled it did and in everyday parlance, legalized gay marriage in Iowa. Several out of state groups, lead by former Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Bob Vander Plaats, began an anti-retention campaign in Iowa eventually spending \$948,000 in total.¹ The League of Women Voters was instrumental in the State's adoption, in 1962, of the current selection and retention system. As a result, when the system was challenged the League rose to its defense and worked with several groups to educate the public about the effective, but little known, process for judicial selection and retention in our state. The League worked with [Iowan's for Fair and Impartial Courts](#) and the College of Law Pro Bono project to hold two forums on judicial selection and retention. The first was held at Old Brick on September 30th, 2010 and featured retired Supreme Court Justice Linda Neuman and University of Iowa Professor John Whiston. The speakers spoke to the system and Professor Whiston spoke clearly to the issue of the *Varnum* decision and the precedents the Supreme Court cited in their decision.

The LWVJC then worked with the College of Law Pro Bono project to co-author a number of letters to the editor on the issue. That was followed by a second forum entitled, "Who's to Judge? A conversation on the Iowa Judiciary". The event was held on October 21st at the Iowa Memorial Union. Participants included Bob Raftery, Director of Iowan's for Fair and Impartial Courts and former state legislator, Stephen Pace, a member of the Judicial Nomination Commission, and Senior District Judge, David M. Remley. The event was moderated by local attorney, James Hayes. Dawn Suter, LWVJC, provided a brief introduction talking about the League's history of support for the system.

October saw candidate forums for both the Iowa Senate and House races on October 5th and October 12th at the Iowa City Public Library. The League rules don't allow "empty seat" debates so only candidates that had challengers were asked to participate. Further, the majority of candidates in a race had to agree to participate in order for any one of the candidates in that race to participate. Candidates represented not only the Democrat and Republican parties but the Green Party, The Libertarian Party and those with no party affiliation. Naomi Novak and Dawn Suter moderated. *Members may want to debate the rules themselves or their application in the upcoming year if they think the result was limiting on hearing all candidates.*

Voter Services organized a Legislative Priorities briefing with the Johnson County state delegation on January 3, 2011 at the Brown Bottle in Iowa City. Senators Dvorsky and Bolkcom and representatives Mascher and Willems provided their input on the League's 2011 legislative priorities which are: Payday Lending,

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VOTER SERVICES CONTINUED

Improving the Mental Health Care Delivery system and Judiciary and Sentencing Reform. This meeting was covered in detail in the February [Voter](#). The priorities briefing is a unique opportunity for League members to engage with Legislators on issues that are important to them in a relaxed setting. Please look for it in early 2012 and try to attend.

Barbara Beaumont continued her work on the legislative forums in 2011. The LWVJC has held three forums to date on the last Saturday in January, February and March in Iowa City, Coralville and North Liberty respectively. Historically the events have been held at the City Council Chambers in each community because they can be broadcast live from those sites. This year however, the Iowa City meeting had overflow crowds, with some people leaving, so the two subsequent forums were moved to larger facilities. We sacrificed live broadcasting but were able to accommodate a larger audience, estimated at approximately 75 to 100 attendees at both locations. We had great co-sponsors again this year and want to thank: Iowa City Community School District, Iowa City Education Association, American Association of University Professors, Johnson County Victim Advisory Committee, Johnson County Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Sierra Club, Environmental Advocates and the Iowa Federation of Labor. These groups not only provide the coffee and goodies for each forum, they also prepare thoughtful questions that represent their membership and clients and in doing so, raise awareness of the issues important to them. Thank You!

North Central Junior High students have attended the forums for several years. The students have each researched and written a question about a topic they are concerned about. They come to the forum to pose the question to the legislators as part of their training in civic engagement. Their teacher, Alisa Meggitt, has done a great job exposing students to participatory government. We appreciate the students' participation and will continue to work with North Central to make the forums work to accommodate both students and the general public.

All members of the state delegation representing Johnson County are invited to every legislative forum. Since a few of the elected officials are newly elected they are: Senators Joe Bolckom, Robert Dvorsky, James Hahn and Sandra Greiner, and Representatives Nate Willems, Jarad Klein, David Jacoby, Jeff Kaufmann, Vicki Lensing, and Mary Mascher.

The League is a non partisan organization and is mindful of the obligation and opportunities that stance imposes on us. We do ask that audience questions are issue specific and not personal. While Johnson County is strongly Democratic at the ballot box, we believe the positions of all parties representing all citizens of Johnson County need to be heard. We have been disappointed then, that this year, none of the Republican office holders has attended one of our forums. We have encouraged attendees to call or write their elected officials and asked them to attend or to find another way to connect with them to gain an understanding of their positions. We hope to see Senators Hahn and Greiner and Representatives Klein and Kaufman at our May 5th Forum.

The final legislative forum for the 2011 legislative session is scheduled for **Saturday, May 7th, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM at the ICPL room A**. The forum will be broadcast live on either cable channel 4 or 10 and will be taped for rebroadcast.

In closing we want to thank Jerry Nixon, Eric Dickerson and Nick Bergus from the public education and government channels for all their work in broadcasting and taping our events to help us reach a larger public and generally making our events more successful. We also want to thank the public libraries in Iowa City and Coralville who are invaluable partners in many of our endeavors and are vital to the civic lives of their communities. We also want to thank the Elected Officials at all levels of government for their generosity in giving us their time to fulfill our mission of Making Democracy work.