

# The Voter

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

February 2009

## 2008-2009 LWVJC

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## Regional Governance Committee in Full Swing!

**T**HE LEAGUE REGIONAL GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE is in the middle of its eighth year of studying and supporting improvement of regional cooperation in the delivery of local Johnson County government services. During that time, we have investigated, interviewed, heard speakers, discussed and considered, written papers and Power Point presentations, and sometimes advocated for: countywide consolidation or two-tiered forms of countywide government; a consolidation Charter Commission; regional fire protection; central emergency communications system; extended mass transit to developing areas of the county; affordable housing; and regional land use issues. Our newest topic is the problems and possibilities for regional water and sewer systems.

Nancy Lynch is leading the water/sewer project, and we hope to present a program to League members next fall. She could use a volunteer researcher to work with her as she studies water quality issues in Johnson County. Please contact Nancy at 624-3014 or [nalynch@southslope.net](mailto:nalynch@southslope.net) for details.

This committee can also use additional Leaguers to help us monitor intergovernmental meetings such as the Johnson County Council of Governments; the East Central Iowa Council of Governments; joint discussion meetings of the cities, county and school board; and Linn/Johnson Leadership Summit. We are looking for problems or progress in regional cooperation as we attend these meetings.

New members are welcome the committee meetings at any time. For more information, contact any member of the Committee (Barbara Beaumont, Mary Ann Bradford, Pasquale Cancilla, Lori Cardella, Lolly Eggers, Pat Ephgrave, Pat Jensen, Nancy Lynch, Beth Pearson, Rebecca Reiter, Carol Spaziani, and E. Robert Stephens).



Carol Spaziani  
Regional Governance Committee

# U.S. League Study Examines National Popular Vote Compact

**D**ELEGATES TO LWVUS CONVENTION 2008 VOTED to “Study the advisability of using the National Popular Vote Compact among the states as a method for electing the President.” The Johnson County League of Women Voters in April will meet to discuss and take consensus on this issue. Following, in brief, is some background on the compact idea. Members are encouraged to read the following and to go to [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) for further information.

The League has a long-standing position in support of directly electing the President by popular vote. That position, in part, reads: “[LWVUS] believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The LWV believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished...” For that to happen, it would be necessary to amend the Constitution. Now, however, League members have the opportunity to consider if National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) is a viable process to achieve direct popular elections. NPV Compact would avoid a constitutional amendment abolishing the Electoral College and would assure that the individual receiving the most votes would become president.



A quick review of the Electoral College tells us that it was established by the founding fathers as a compromise between the election of the President by Congress and election by popular vote. Citizens actually vote for electors who then vote for the President and Vice-President. This system was designed to: 1) ensure that the smaller states had a role in the election of the President and 2) emphasize the power of the states in our federalist system. The Constitution leaves it up to the states to determine the “manner” in which electors are chosen. Now the manner chosen by all states is popular election and most of them use a winner-take-all system, in which the candidate who receives a majority of the vote takes all of the state’s electoral votes.

The NPV Compact proposal uses the mechanism of the Electoral College. States that legislatively enact NPV Compact would agree that their state electors would vote for the individual who received the most votes nationwide. Elections officials in participating states would award their electoral votes to the candidate who won the popular vote, no matter how each of their own states voted.

This alternative method of assigning a state’s electoral votes would take effect only if it is enacted by states collectively possessing a majority of the electoral votes (270). Currently Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, and New Jersey have enacted such compact legislation.

**Constitutional Issues:** Supporters of NPV Compact note that the Compact is a way to assure that every person’s vote counts equally and that the person receiving the most votes is the winner of the presidency. The Constitution would not need to be amended because states now have the right to make changes in how electors are chosen (it would need to be amended to abolish the Electoral College). Opponents, particularly many constitutional scholars, argue that this plan will lead to extensive litigation

*Continued on page 3.*

involving challenges to the NVP Compact on issues such as the scope of constitutional powers, the Compact itself, the need for congressional approval, the concerns of non-compacting states, and constitutional protections of state interests and their role in elections.

**Supporting Opinion:** Supporters say that a candidate can be elected president by receiving the most electoral votes even if he or she did not receive the most popular votes. This is not a result voters expect or desire. As election campaigns are now waged, major emphasis and resources are concentrated in key battleground states because that is where elections are won or lost. NPV Compact would eliminate the emphasis on battleground states and would be more apt to assure campaign strategies that appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate which would foster greater voter participation. The argument that the plan would negatively impact states' rights is countered by poll results showing that most voters want their individual vote to count, rather than allotting them to electors representing the state as a whole.

**Opposing Opinion:** Opponents say that voters supporting the candidate who receives the majority of votes in their state want their state's electors to support their choice. Adoption of NPV Compact may require a state elections official to direct its state's electors to cast their ballots in support of a candidate who was not favored by that state's voters. Passage of NPV Compact would result in the emphasis of presidential campaigns shifting from the battleground states to areas of large concentrations of population. So, while some voters are disenfranchised by the Electoral College, others might be disenfranchised by NPV Compact. Because the Compact requires entry into a contract with other states which binds state elections officials to direct electors to vote in a certain way, regardless of the outcome of the election in their state, states' rights are diminished.

Prepare for the LWVJC April 18 consensus meeting by reading the complete version of the National Popular Voter Compact Study Committee paper at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). The website also has papers in support of and opposition to NPV Compact as well as a resource list and the consensus questions.

**The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.**

**Membership in the League offers personal involvement for the public good.**



**The League, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.**



## Happy Birthday!

**THE U.S. LWV CELEBRATED ITS 89TH BIRTHDAY ON FEBRUARY 14!**

Ensure another 89 years by inviting others to an event and encouraging them to join. Impress upon them that membership in the League offers personal involvement for the public good.

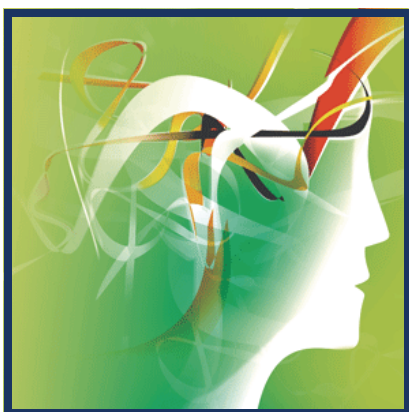
## From the President

**I**T IS A NEW YEAR AND TIME TO GET FOCUSED for the LWVJC activities coming up. Please mark the following events on your calendar:

***"The Justice Center: It's not Just a Jail Issue"***: February 24, 2009, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, Iowa City Public Library, 123 South Linn St., meeting room A. The Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys and the Johnson County Bar Association are co-sponsoring this event.



**Forum**: February 28, 9:30 am, Iowa City Civic Center, 410 E. Washington St., Emma Harvatt Hall. Forum topic and co-sponsor TBA.



***"Transforming Iowa's Mental Health System"***: March 25, 7:00 -8:30 pm, Coralville Public Library, 1401 Fifth St., meeting room A. LWVIA Committee members Jamie Sawin and Nancy Brown will be presenting this League of Women Voters of Iowa's study. Read the entire **"Iowa Comprehensive Study of Mental Health Delivery Systems in Iowa"** on the LWVIA website.

**Forum**: March 28, 9:30 am, Iowa City Civic Center, 410 E. Washington St., Emma Harvatt Hall. Forum topic and co-sponsor TBA.

**Sales Tax Forum**: April 16, Iowa City Public Library, 123 South Linn St., meeting room A. Time TBA.

**Ready to Run™ Iowa**: April 3, Iowa State University campus, Ames. Registration is \$75 a person if postmarked by March 21, 2009, and \$100 per person after March 21. More information can be found on the [LWVIA website](#).



**National Popular Vote Compact discussion/consensus**: April 18, 9:30 – 11:00 am, Coralville Public Library, 1401 Fifth St., Coralville, in E. Jean Schwab Auditorium.

**Annual Meeting Banquet**: May 6. The program will be a celebration of citizens in our League who have been members 5 decades. Time and location TBA.

As you can see, we have very worthwhile topics to study and discuss. It will be great to hear all your views! Invite a friend!

Polly Horton  
President, LWV Johnson County

## Alert on Planning

**I**T HAS COME TO MY ATTENTION that, when one of our local Leagues was planning a program on payday loans, they received a request from a payday loan provider asking to be on the program. A similar situation happened last year. However, the LWVIA wants to make your local League aware of the following regulation. Once the LWVIA has reached a position on an issue, we do not have speakers on the opposing side



present their case. We study all sides of an issue when we are studying a topic, but, after we take consensus or adopt a position based on a national issue, we no longer provide time for speakers on the opposing side.

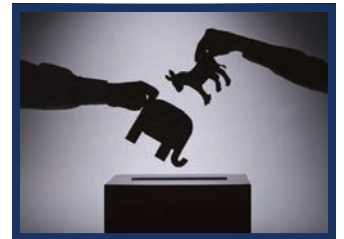
The only exception to this regulation is when you hold a candidate forum or legislative breakfast. Of course, a member of the public is free to ask a question or speak about an issue that might be contrary to a League position.

Judie Hoffman, [lobbyst@lwvia.org](mailto:lobbyst@lwvia.org)  
*Lobbyist, League of Women Voters of Iowa*

## Working on Election Day

**H**AVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WORKING at the polls on election day but were put off by the thought of a sixteen-hour day? The auditor's office is always looking for competent election officials and are now willing to offer 8-hour split shifts. Make it easier for the auditor's office; find someone who is willing to split a 16-hour shift with you and both of you apply naming the other. To sign up, call the Auditor's office at 356-6004.

I started working at the polls after the election problems in 2000, as I wanted to find out first-hand how voting works at the local level. I began working as an election



official in Minnesota and continued when I moved back to Iowa. Minnesota already had same-day registration, but it was much more difficult to vote absentee and there was no early voting. We are fortunate that we have satellite voting in Johnson County to make voting so easy.

Barbara Beaumont  
*LWV member*

**I**N HONOR OF JAN SINES'S BIRTHDAY, Frank and Gail Zlatnik proudly made a donation to the League of Women Voters of Johnson County. Happy birthday, Jan!



*If you have anyone you want to honor in this manner, contact LWVJC treasurer, Julie Pulkrabek.*

**A**CCESS LWV WEBSITES EASILY! Simply click on a link below and be automatically directed to the corresponding website. It's that easy!

LWV (Johnson County): [www.lwvjc.org](http://www.lwvjc.org)

LWV (Des Moines): [www.lwvmdm.org](http://www.lwvmdm.org)

LWV (Iowa): [www.lwvia.org](http://www.lwvia.org)

LWV (United States): [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

Previous Voter newsletters: [www.lwvjc.org/newsletter.html](http://www.lwvjc.org/newsletter.html)

# The Importance of the League's Per Member

One of the important duties that our LWVJC Treasurer, Julie Pulkrabek, does on a quarterly basis is send our League's Per Member Payment (PMP) to the National League and the Iowa League. PMP is our financial support to the national and state organizations, the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters of Iowa (LWVIA).

Although the LWVUS and the LWVIA may have members who join directly with them, the majority of League members join and are active at the city or county level. Four times each year, city and county Leagues submit a specific amount of money per member to the national and state Leagues as determined by delegates voting during their convention.

During this 2008-2009 budget year, the LWVIA has requested a total of \$1,887.50, and LWVUS has requested a total of \$2,092.00 for a total PMP of \$3,979.00. The LWVJC membership is currently 94 members, and the total amount of dues collected is \$5,017.50.

As you can see, after the LWVIA and LWVUS PMPs have been paid, \$1,078.50 is what remains from the LWVJC's dues. It is easy to see why LWVJC has an annual fund drive each year to increase our income. Where would we be if we didn't have three levels of League? How well would we function without supporting each level? Your financial assistance is always welcome.

Mary Ann Bradford

Director, 2009 Annual Fund Drive



Board members Audrey Moeller, Alison Smith, and Pam Stewart proactively work on recruiting Gwendolyn Smith as a future league member during the Fall Legislative Reception in Iowa City, Iowa.

**D**O YOU HAVE PICTURES OF LWV EVENTS that you would like to share with the membership? Send them to *the Voter's* editor, Alison Werner Smith, at [awsmith@mchsi.com](mailto:awsmith@mchsi.com) for inclusion in an upcoming issue. Make sure include any identifying information, including names, a description, event involved, and location. As always, news, articles, and announcements for *the Voter* are desired! Your input and participation ensures that important announcements, informative articles, and significant news reaches your fellow members. If you have a submission, please email it on or before the 15th of each month to ensure both the timeliness of *the Voter* and the sanity of the editor.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF JOHNSON COUNTY, IOWA

P.O. Box 2251, Iowa City, Iowa 52244

[www.lwvjc.org](http://www.lwvjc.org)

