



The VOTER

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Johnson County

LWVJC Officers and Directors 2004-2005

Co-President

Pasquale Cancilla
644-2807

Pamela Stewart
683-2323

Vice-President

Linda Levey
351-5141

Secretary

Patricia Hayek
337-9333

Treasurer

Kathy Penningroth
645-1476

Director of Funding

Nancy Lynch
624-3014

Voter Editor

Patricia Ephgrave
466-9361

Directors

Barbara Beaumont
626-6227

Ann Bovbjerg
338-2294

Jean Lakin
351-2629

Audrey Moeller
466-0945

Rebecca Reiter
354-7163

Reexamining the League Position:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

CAN WE MEET THE NEED?

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County will sponsor an educational forum on Affordable Housing on March 23, 2005 at the Iowa City Public Library in Room A at 7 PM.

The purpose of the program will be to understand the concept of affordable housing and the gap between supply and demand. A panel of speakers representing the private sector, nonprofit organizations and local government will lead the discussion.

- Matthew Hayek, Attorney from the firm of Hayek, Hayek, Brown & Moreland LLP, represents the private sector on our panel. In addition to his work as an attorney he contributes time to the community as the chair of the Housing and Community Development Commission and of the Scattered Site Housing Taskforce.
- Andy Johnson represents the non profit sector as the Executive Director of the Housing Trust Fund of Johnson County. This private non-profit organization addresses housing needs for low income people of Johnson County.
- Karen Franklin, Director of Planning and Community Development for Iowa City represents the government efforts to meet housing needs.

Members of the LWVJC are encouraged to attend as well as the general public. As an outcome of the session the League hopes to update its statement on housing and develop a program to assist in any legislative needs that will lead to affordable housing. Members will be encouraged to offer their assistance to the League in this effort.

CO-PRESIDENTS' LETTER-----

We are well into February and the League of Women Voters is hitting the headlines. Recently on NPR the Iowa League was congratulated on emphasizing the importance of judicial sentencing and reform in Iowa. Thanks to Pat Jensen, who was also recognized by the Press-Citizen for her leadership on the need to make "working groups" of our legislators open and to allow public participation. Our league published a similar notice in an Op-Ed piece in the Press-Citizen along with a number of other priorities of the State and Local League.

The first legislative forum was very well attended with probing questions from the attendees and illuminating discussion by our Legislators. Young grade school students asked out-standing questions which received excellent responses from our legislators. Their participation was featured in a report of the meeting published in the Press-Citizen.

Our Board is asking for volunteers to "watchdog" local government bodies on certain units of government or topics. Pat Jensen reminded us that State and National positions receive similar oversight. Interested members should call Pasquale Cancilla or Pam Stewart.

Several interesting meetings and forums are scheduled : Feb 22 is Lobby Day in Des Moines. Call 644-2807 for details. March 23 is a forum on Affordable Housing in Johnson County---see notice in this Voter. April 20 is a forum on Comprehensive plans and zoning in Johnson County together with activities towards regionalizing and coordinating local government activities

The annual meeting will be May 18 at the Holiday Inn Coralville from 5:30-7:30 PM with Pat Jensen as the featured speaker. Our annual reception will be at the Cancilla Farm on June 16.

Pam Stewart and Pasquale Cancilla.

Do You Have a **PASSION**....

For League Issues

Do you find local issues: city and county government, housing, or parks fascinating?

Does our state fiscal policy, its justice system or environment engage you?

Are you concerned about the election process of the national government, its social, education, environment policies, or its commitment to the democratic process?



Once League

had Observers at committee, council, and legislative meetings. Today, we do not have members with free time to make these meetings. Yet we must follow events to study, inform others, and take positions on issues. We need new strategies.

Voila! The watchdog volunteer **MONITORS** to the rescue! This is your opportunity to make a difference on your time schedule. Today, many meetings can be monitored

through the online posting of agendas and minutes. Newspaper and magazine articles, the internet, and TV broadcasts are other sources of information.

If you are willing to gather material on a topic, watch for important events or decisions relating to it, and become part of a loose group tracking an issue, you too, can be a **MONITOR!**

Put your passion and enthusiasm to work at times convenient to you!

Do you **CARE** about League issues? Then help make your favorite topics understandable to the general public by serving as a **LEAGUE MONITOR**. Contact Pat Ephgrave at 319-466-9361. Please make that call today!

JCLWV REPORT ON REGIONAL GOVERNMENT FOR JOHNSON COUNTY

In the spring of 2001, the League decided to form a Regional Government Committee to study regional government including the forms, structures, advantages and disadvantages of regional government and how they might apply to Johnson County and its local jurisdictions.

Regional governments formed in the United States over the last century were studied and the benefits cited by these consolidated governments were: improved efficiencies in provision of services, coordination of planning, zoning and transportation and an ability to present a united front in seeking economic development. Also, all consolidated governments studied had strong elected executives as well as chief management officers.

The Regional Government Committee then began conducting interviews with some 25 community leaders (elected and appointed local officials from various jurisdictions, members of the business community and of local organizations, and political leaders). Those interviewed were asked to what extent cooperation and coordination exists among governments in Johnson County, the quality of intergovernmental relations among governments, and how the quality or extent of cooperation could be improved. They were also asked to assess how likely any changes

they suggested were to be implemented and what might prevent or support any changes.

The results of these interviews led to these conclusions:

- Cooperation between local governments in the county exists, but there is room for improvement.
- The Johnson County Council of Governments (JCCOG) could achieve greater effectiveness through addressing more inter-governmental issues and redesigning the makeup of the council.
-
- There was little interest in changing the structure of governments within Johnson County to form a regional or metropolitan government but there was support for incremental change through delivering regional services, one at a time, to the entire area.
- Any changes toward regionalization would require education of the public.

The interviewees were then surveyed to identify three services for possible merger. The

top five in order were: **transit, libraries, public safety, emergency dispatch, building codes and inspection.** We decided **emergency dispatch and fire protection** had the best chance for success as a countywide system because these services have the most immediate and critical impact on the most people. They both also have well-developed system of cooperation

We then made presentation of our findings to: the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, the City Councils of Iowa City, Coralville, North Liberty, Solon, Lone Tree, the Iowa City Chamber of Commerce Local Government Affairs committee, the Coralville Fire Chief, Johnson County Mutual aid Association, the

Iowa City Charter Review Commission, and Johnson County legislators.

We found resistance to any merger of fire protection in Johnson County but considerable interest in having a county wide emergency dispatch center. In fact, Iowa City is now in the process of hiring a consultant to assess the cost and feasibility of such a system.

We plan to continue to speak to groups about consolidation of governments and services and to monitor government meetings, particularly JCCOG, to learn more about government entities, how they operate and how they can be improved.

Rebecca Reiter

**Plan to Attend the LWVIA Convention 2005 in Ames, Iowa, Friday and Saturday,
May 13th & 14th**

**Nominating Committee of LWVJC
Seeks Nominations**

The following positions are open:

Vice-President-2 year term

Secretary-2year term

3 Directors-2 year terms

If you are interested in serving on the Board as an officer or director or would like to suggest someone for us to contact please let us know.

Nominating Committee:

Rebecca Reiter (319) 354-7163

rebecca-reiter@uiowa.edu

Jan Sines (319) 338-9316

Gail Zlatnik (319) 351-8084 gzlatnik@mynav.net

According to the by-laws the nominating committee report shall be sent to all members at least two weeks before the annual meeting. The report shall be presented at the annual meeting, May 18, 2005.

New Members Welcomed to LWVJC!

June Silliman, 2125 Nor Cor. Coralville IA 52241
319 338 1979

jsilli@aol.com

Darcy Koehn, 6 Westview Acres NE Iowa City
IA 52240 319 351 1573

Darcy@mchsi.com

LaVonn Horton 2315 Rochester Ave #209 Iowa
City IA 52245-3406 319 339 0331

cohorts451@abccemail.net

As we welcome new members, we are sad that Lennie Hale has moved to Seattle to be closer to family. Her address is: Horizon House, Apt. 1-U
900 University Street, Seattle, Washington 98101-2789.

LWVJC CALENDAR MARCH---APRIL 2005

MARCH

7 Board Meeting--Iowa City Public Library Room
E @ 4 PM

23 General Meeting--Affordable Housing
Iowa City Public Library Room 7 PM

26 Legislative Forum--I.C. Council Chambers @
9:30--11:30- AM

APRIL

4 Board Meeting--Iowa City Public Library Room
E @ 4 PM

20 General Meeting--Charter Commission

30 Legislative Forum--I.C. Council Chambers @
9:30-11:30 AM