

LWV MINNESOTA NEWS

LWV Minnesota—A monthly newsletter covering State office activities

November 2016

From the President

Out of an Election Comes Opportunity

This column initially was a reflection on how far we've come in the 97 years since women won the right to vote. Women had finally broken that thickest of glass ceilings. We had achieved equality at the ballot box and every little girl woke up knowing that she could become president. That column has been stored for another day, hopefully soon. So, what then? Do we despair of what could have been or do we celebrate our successes?

We — all of you — absolutely made a very real difference in this election. Overall voter turnout was 74.11%, according to the Secretary of State. That's an incredible recovery from the 50.11% who voted in 2014 and just slightly off the memorable 2012 elections with its two constitutional amendments. Voter turnout that year was 76.42%. The League's work directly impacted thousands of voters who turned out for the forums, read articles in local newspapers about them, viewed the forums online, or talked with friends about them. With 29 local Leagues reporting in so far, we know that League hosted 179 events covering more than 411 races and more than 8,570 voters attending. Your local Leagues also registered more than 3,300 voters. Those are numbers worth celebrating!

Something else came out of this election. On the morning after the election, women across Minnesota were speaking up online, expressing a new-found desire to get involved, become active, be a voice for justice and for those without a voice. Some spoke of organizing, saying, "Let's form an organization to work for change." Who better to be that voice than the League of Women Voters? This group is eager to make a difference in their community right now so that when the next election comes, their voices are heard. Let's welcome everyone to join us in continuing the work begun a century ago. I urge you to make it easy for them to find you — is your Facebook page current? How about your webpage? Is there a prominent join button? Are you inviting friends, family or coworkers to join? By Friday, at least three new groups have sprung up in Minnesota who want to mobilize and take action on public policy. Numerous articles suggest organizations people can join, donate to or volunteer for. The League can and should be on those lists.

The proof of this groundswell came at the ABC League meeting on November 14th. Six guests attended, motivated by their personal need to find a way to engage in positive change. They found League through social media, took the first step, and all are eager to become involved and join. By the next morning, I had personal notes from two of them saying they've joined already. By the end of the evening, the ABC leaders were talking about how to specifically work with these newest members to build on their passion and energy. As your local League meets to talk about its future, invite others to attend, turn a fresh eye toward what we can and should be doing right now to prepare for the next legislative session in Minnesota.

100 years ago when the suffragists were jailed, beaten and force-fed, they did not give up. They continued to organize, mobilize and fight. Three years later, in 1919, the battle for the vote was won. Out of that fight, the League of Women Voters was created in Minnesota by Clara Ueland, a tireless advocate for voting rights, children, education, immigrants, the environment and justice. The League is still here fighting every day in many of your communities by educating our neighbors on topics ranging from protecting the Mississippi, voting rights and campaign finance reform. We have no choice. We must continue on in that same spirit of our foremothers.

What's ahead for League members? First, what can our organization do to help rebuild our deeply divided country? What role can we play in building bridges, not walls? How can we create forums that are places of listening and questioning, not judging? How can we build diverse coalitions that together are stronger than the prejudice, hate and divisiveness we've seen? After that, take your pick of issues — campaign finance reform, water quality, redistricting reform, expanded rural broadband access, building our membership. What's happening in your community and how can we foster understanding and collaboration as we find and implement solutions?

The women didn't give up in 1916 and neither will we. My grandmother Rose came to this country alone from Syria in 1908 at the age of 17. Her picture was next to my ballot as I did what she never could — vote — because she had no education and never learned to read or write English. By 1918 she was a widow with five small children and no source of income out on

the prairie. Today, she's on my mind, not for her accomplishments, but because she puts these last 100 years in perspective. From an uneducated immigrant homesteader who was just another woman with no voice to today when we have women and men, gay and straight, Somali and Asian and Hispanic all having a hand in shaping the future of our country. It's taken 100 years, but the progress is real and I'm choosing to celebrate it, for Rose.

To each of you, please know that your contributions of time, expertise, moral support and funding have not gone unnoticed. It is because of you that the League persists. Thank you.

No one said democracy was easy or free. Several of you have written me expressing your fears, exhaustion and sense of defeat. I share your sorrow and your tears. I also share your concern for the many issues on which League members are so passionate. As we regroup and prepare for 2017, it will be imperative that we narrow our focus to protect the rights we've fought for over the past 100 years. To refresh your memory, check out our Program for Action. Today the work begins again. Okay, well maybe tomorrow.

Terry



Terry Kalil
LWV Minnesota President



LWVUS

At the June National Convention, LWV members voted in favor or supporting the efforts of the District of Columbia seeking statehood. LWV DC will be presenting its program and toolkit to Minnesota members on Saturday, November 19 from 9:30 – 11:30 at the St. Louis Park City Hall. All are invited to attend. The program begins at 10:00m and will be lived streamed for those who cannot physically attend.

Additionally, LWVUS is offering a Webinar on December 8

On November 8, the citizens of the District of Columbia overwhelmingly passed an advisory referendum supporting statehood for DC. The LWV of the District of Columbia is meeting with selected state and local Leagues over the next few weeks, but all League members can support this effort by signing up for the **December 8, 7pm EST** webinar by the LWVDC and the LWVEF to learn how to “Fix the Hole in Our Democracy.” [Register for the Webinar now](#) and hear how you and your League can educate your communities on the need for full representation and statehood for DC. Additional materials on the project can be found on the League management site. For questions or assistance on signing up for the webinar contact Betsy Lawson at blawson@lww.org.



Executive Director's Report

Take a deep breathe, now exhale. Our work continues.

The election is behind us and while we will be sifting through lots of data in the weeks to come, it's clear the composition of our legislature at the state level and national level will be different in the new year. The State House will now be composed of 76 Republicans, 57 DFL members, with one special election scheduled for February 14. 85 are men, 48 are women, Of the 23 newly elected members 12 are Republican, 11 are DFL. 93.2 % of incumbents were re-elected. We're expecting leadership roles to change, as well as talk about committee restructure. The State Senate is also expected to be Republican majority by at least one seat. A couple of recounts won't yield results until the election is certified, but it's believed the current results will likely hold.

We and other nonprofit organizations will be working under this new environment. It's too early to tell, but our voting rights agenda will likely need to be adjusted. Just prior to the election, a few lawsuits were filed that may indicate a renewed movement to pass photo voter id and eliminate same day voter registration. We're expecting a shift in the numbers of legislators who favor restoring voting rights to individuals with past felonies and there will be opportunities to educate newly elected officials about these issues and others that we follow. We will also want to be paying attention to the campaign spending data. We know that two Congressional races, the third and eighth district brought in millions of out of state money and the state house race in St. Cloud was one of the most expensive. There will likely be other examples of undisclosed dollars flowing into state and even local races. Redistricting takes on a new urgency and we'll be seeking out ways in which we can work with our community partners to draw them into discussion and support legislation that will yield results that are more transparent and less partisan. We are working with Common Cause to plan a panel discussion that we hope to co-host before the start of session.

It's also too soon to predict the impact on racial equity work that so many organizations are engaged in. At the MN Council of Nonprofit Public Policy Cabinet post election meeting, many organizations expressed deep concern and are gearing up for a difficult road ahead. Some groups articulated the increasing divide between Metro, outstate and rural Minnesota communities. Healthcare access and choice was cited as a top issue as well as the conflict between the need to fill jobs with an educated and diverse workforce while some communities are struggling with the unwelcomed change in demographics to fill those positions. Loss of funding was also an expressed concern.

While LWV Minnesota members share a deep interest in a myriad of issues, but our role in expanding the franchise and voter protection has a renewed call to urgency and must take precedence. That means we must be working with our local LWVs and community partners on specific issues in ways that LWV is not necessarily accustomed to. As we begin implementing the strategic plan, we must be laser focused on policy reforms that are central to our mission. We are receiving many calls and emails from people interested in getting involved. This election has highly motivated them to seek action for positive change. The new administration doesn't begin until January, but early signs indicate that many groups of people have legitimate fears for their personal futures and of the work they support and they are eager to stem the tide of policy reversals.

LWV Minnesota needs to readjust the way it does its work. We need to adopt an organizing model so that we can respond more comprehensively to voting rights protection issues. This means we need to treat each issue as a separate campaign. Volunteers interested in working on voting rights, redistricting, or campaign finance reform need to come together and create a holistic program of action from the start that includes research, messaging, showing up at legislators offices, showing

up at the capitol, testifying and partnering with the wider community to engage and empower them to specific calls to action.

One of the long-range goals cited in the LWV Minnesota's strategic plan is to demonstrate a culture of inclusivity in all we do. We started this journey at our June 2015 convention, we then went on to develop curriculum with our community partners for the website *Your Vote Your Voice MN* and the ongoing outreach with high schools and community youth groups, and now training the board, staff, Equity and Inclusion Task Force and eventually local Leagues in cultural competency. Now more than ever, LWV must learn to be good allies to people of color, LGBTQ, disabled and native communities. LWV is a privileged group. Yes, we come out of the women's suffrage movement and all women have yet to achieve equity, but most of us will not face verbal or bodily threats as we walk through the streets or take mass transit. The fear is real and the hatred unleashed from one of most vitriolic campaigns must be stifled. We all have a role to play, but we need to understand even with the best intentions, we can do more harm than good when we have limited experiences around racial equity experiences. That is why our commitment to racial equity training is so important.

If there are any silver linings to be found from this negative election cycle, is that it calls further attention to the importance of our work. Our Facebook page has received many more visits over the last week and we are receiving inquiries from younger voters to join the League. We must seize this opportunity to be welcoming and to listen to how and why they wish to be engaged. Because they do want to be engage. The younger generations will bear the brunt if long fought policy reforms get reversed. We must be strategic, focused and very intentional as we navigate a new political landscape, making sure we act as good allies to those who will directly feel the impact of these projected changes. We come out of a movement from the past that afforded many women the right to vote. Our continued work is to help eliminate voter suppression, to educate and engage Minnesotans in the issues of import and to help them be empowered by using their voices and their votes to effect positive changes for their communities.



Susan Sheridan Tucker



ROSTER UPDATES DUE JANUARY 31, 2017

Remember to be updating your roster in the LWVUS Database regularly from now on until early January to ensure correct PMP billing for FY2017-2018. Always include membership expiration dates. If you need help, please be sure to look at the user manual [here](#) or contact rostersupport@lww.org.

In order to help local Leagues with this process, the state office will put a copy of a spreadsheet with both current database records from the state as well as a LWVUS database roster from earlier this year in your google drive in the upcoming few weeks. These spreadsheets can help make sense of the differences as you update your rosters on LWVUS. Notifications will be sent to your local League as the spreadsheets are available. For questions or concerns regarding updating the LWVUS database, please contact Dilreet at ddhaliwal@lwwmn.org.

Strategic Planning Update

A huge thank you to all who participated in the second stakeholder survey. Over 200 individuals responded with hundreds of comments. The feedback and suggestions will be utilized as staff prepares its work plans. It also provides us guidance to ways in which we will roll the plan out to local Leagues and receive



The report will be released in the coming days and sent under separate cover. It will also be posted on the state website under the Strategic Planning tab.

In the coming months we will match work plans with our budget, which will be approved at the April 29 State Convention. I encourage everyone to spend time reading the plan and continue thinking about ways in which we can build stronger bridges between the state office and local LWVs.

As we prioritize our near future work around “Making Democracy Work for All”, we want to hear from local LWVs about your specific plans to participate in this program as well as the other issues you may be addressing that impact your local community. More than ever we need to be a unified force and building relationships with our neighbors and those we don’t yet know in our community to understand their concerns and what will motivate them to take action.

As we have said from the start, this is meant to be a rolled out plan over time. Some of the goals are aspirational and meant to be worked on over a long period of time. As we build the League to be more inclusive and representative of our communities, we need to be developing the skills to converse with those who do have differing viewpoints, determine where we can find common interests and work towards building an educated and empowered electorate who value the principals and the processes of our democracy, while working towards a progressive agenda that will benefit the commonweal.

Members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Cheryl Felix - LWV Crystal, New Hope, East Plymouth
Liz Lauder - LWV White Bear Lake Area
Susan Sheridan Tucker Executive Director
Anne Carroll, Consultant

Jeorgette Knoll - LWV Anoka, Blaine, Coon Rapids
Miriam Simmons - LWV White Bear Lake Area

Equity and Inclusion Task Force

The Task Force and two board members met on Monday, November 14 for its first group training. Facilitated by our partners Jewish Community Action, the group was introduced to an organizing communication tool: one-on-one conversations. These conversations are intentional in scope, to enable each participant to learn more deeply about why one is involved in the work.

Vic Rosenthal demonstrated the level of sharing that is expected when using this tool. He shared an abbreviated version of his life's journey, naming specific relationships and experiences that led him to a 40-year career in Community Organizing and social justice advocacy. One-on-ones call for individuals to be reflective and if comfortable sharing one's story beyond a superficial level. Jewish Community Action uses this tool regularly with its staff and its volunteers. Knowing an individual's story helps create empathy and understanding, as well as creating meaningful relationships. Individuals are drawn to social justice issues because they have deep interests in creating a better world. Yet, so often in our lives, we don't take the time to sit, be present with another and listen to each other's stories. Utilizing this tool in appropriate spaces, enables individual relationships to build and provides an organization greater knowledge about the motivations of its members and can then best direct their efforts to arenas that will be meaningful to the individual as well as the organization.

Vic then demonstrated "how" to do a one-on-one with one of the Task Force members, taking 10 minutes to ask questions about the other individual, but making sure, he listened to the responses and reflected further curiosity with follow up questions. From there the group broke up into pairs and over 40 minutes practiced with one another.

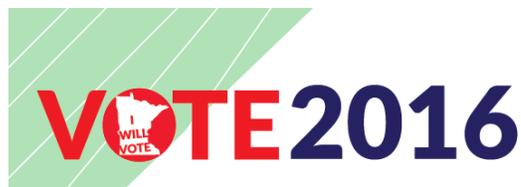
The Task Force will continue to practice this tool with one another. Each has been asked to connect with at least 3-4 members prior to the year-end. As these members become more comfortable with engaging in this intentional and transformational conversations, we will expand the training to other local LWVs and members. We see this as an essential tool for boards to know one another better and eventually to use this as one of the tools we rely on as we work with other community organizations engaged in the similar work as League.



The Equity & Inclusion Task Force is a group of local LWV members recently formed to address issues around racial and social justice, and to create a more inclusive LWV Minnesota. The Task Force is staffed by Liz Haan, Community Organizer, with support by office interns. Additional member participation is welcome! All interested are encouraged to reach out to Liz at lhaan@lwvmn.org ASAP!

Voter Service

Many thanks to the dozens of League Members who gave their time and energy to the 2016 Election cycle. Before you take a well earned rest, remember to complete your grant reports by December 5th. We will be collecting data from all Leagues participating in the Martin and Brown grant.



For those Leagues who did not apply for a grant, please make sure to complete your volunteer reporting forms found on our website. This will enable us to capture your work so we can tell the League's story in its totality.

State Convention, April 28 - 29, 2017



It's not too early to be planning for State Convention. While plans are in the beginning stages, please mark your calendars for April 28 - April 29, 2017

We also want to encourage local LWVs to budget some of your education funds to cover the expenses of your League delegates to attend convention.