



LWV Corvallis

Serving Benton and Linn Counties

December 2003



December Potluck & Presentation

National League of Women Voters (LWVUS)
Program Planning

Featured Speaker:

Rosie Stephens
LWVUS Board

Tuesday, December 9, 2003

Program:

5:30 to 6:15 PM -- Dinner
6:15 to 7:00 PM -- Speaker
7:00 to 9:00 PM -- Discussion

Unitarian Church
Education Hall
2945 NW Circle Boulevard

- *December potluck for LWV Corvallis members only -*
 - *Please bring bowls, cups and utensils -*
 - *Soups, breads and desserts provided by the LWV Corvallis Board -*

 - *If you need a ride, volunteer drivers may be available.*
 - *Contact a Board member for more information. -*
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER: Thanks for the Gifts

As we pause for the holidays, I want to thank those members upon whose gifts we rely. Patty McClintock answers our message phone and passes those messages along to the appropriate person. Thanks to Patty, who has been a long time League member and has served in many capacities. Thanks to Corrine Gobeli, a former president, for forwarding announcements to our members and organizing the Book Club. Thanks to Shelly Murphy, who does publicity for our events and facilitates the transfer of information to our website.

Kathy Seeburger gathers our articles and puts them together in this Bulletin. We are lucky to have her help us. Will Koenitzer filled in for Kathy in October and worked his way through several computer glitches to get the November Bulletin out in time. Thanks, Will. Mel Walters collects the Bulletin, affixes labels, sorts and mails the Bulletin. She's the only one who is not intimidated by the bulk mailing process. Thanks, Mel. When Mel is not available, Jean Nath fills her mail trays. Jean has been active in land use for years but she still has a little more time for us. Thanks, Jean.

We are fortunate to have board members who have facilitated programs this fall. Thanks to Liz Frenkel and Peggy Lynch for their expertise on the land use program in October. Thanks to Shelly Murphy and fellow committee members Sue Mariner, Miriam Miller and JoAnne Trow for their research on Local Funding Options for the November 18 meeting. Thanks to Kathy Connor, a former president, for moderating the Judicial Independence Forum, and Carolyn Madsen for handling the question cards. Thanks to Pat Bishop for setting up the Fall Festival booth. Thanks to Karyle Butcher for reservations for our events. Thanks to Marolyn Tarrant for arranging membership socials. Thanks to Kirk Bailey, for tracking affordable housing issues. Thanks to Walter Barkan, current LWVOR vice-president, for inviting Rosie Stephens, LWVUS board member, to speak at our program planning meeting this month. Thanks to all the members who have come out for events.

Thanks also go to your LWVOR Action Committee members, who have continued in the interim. LWVOR has asked the local Leagues to conduct post-legislative interviews with legislators in their areas. Paula Krane, former LWVOR President, and Peggy Lynch, LWVOR Action Committee member, were eager to help with these interviews. The Action Committee will be monitoring tax reform efforts and the interim session hearings. LWVOR also is in the process of gathering information for the Funding Oregon Study, and we again have members, JoAnne Trow, Peggy Lynch and Louise Ferrell, who are working on that study. We appreciate their contributions at the state level.

Thanks to all members who ordered and sold grapefruit this fall. Doris Waring estimates we have approximately 400 orders this year, due to be delivered December 6. Doris and Dick Waring have organized our delivery routes and have readied computer files to pass on to the next finance chairpersons. Thanks to the Warings, Lois Zaerr, co-chair, and all those who bought and delivered the grapefruit. Besides the juicy reward, you will all be contributing to the operation of our organization for another year.

May you all have good holidays with your family and friends. See you in the New Year.

LWV Corvallis

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Mission

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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The bulletin is the newsletter of the LWV Corvallis and is produced nine times a year. Members subscribe through their dues. Membership is open to anyone 18 years or older.



HOT FOOD AND HOT TOPICS WITH YOUR PROGRAM PLANNING

We hope you will be lured into coming out for the hot dinner and the hot topics at the December 9 program planning meeting. A social hour with hot soup, bread and desserts will preface our program planning discussion. These days, many citizens are discussing national issues: the declaration of war; the Patriot Act; judicial appointments; campaign finance; digital voting machines; the energy infrastructure; oil exploration in the arctic; the Medicare drug benefit; and health care for all. Which of these topics create a little steam in your household? Come share with us. We want to know which areas interest our members.

A focus this calendar year (2003–04) is program planning at the national level. We are fortunate to have a LWVUS Board Member, Rosie Stephens, in Oregon. Rosie has been invited to speak to us about the national issues and answer our questions. LWVUS has requested that local Leagues review the current public policy positions and recommend one position for review and update in the 2004–2006 biennium. LWVUS asked for one other program recommendation for study or concurrence. The recommended program topics are due to LWVUS by March 1, after which the national program policy recommendations will be formulated. The LWVUS convention will be held in June 2004 in Washington, D. C. Two local board members will be sent as well as LWVOR board members.

The LWVUS action agenda has focused on campaign finance reform and the Help America Vote Act. The current LWVUS study is "Election of the President" while "Apportionment" was voted in as a second study if resources allow. Recent national studies have been on international trade and the United Nations. The LWVUS Judicial Independence Project could lead to a position on the judicial branch of government. There is no criminal justice policy although there is one on gun control. The LWVUS report form and the public policy positions are included in this Bulletin. If you cannot attend the December 9 meeting, we ask that you take a few minutes to fill in these forms and send them to LWV Corvallis, P.O. Box 1679, Corvallis, OR 97339.

--Karen Nibler

SMART GROWTH CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars -- the third annual "New Partners for Smart Growth" conference will be held in Portland, January 22–24, 2004. The LWVOR is a cosponsor. Web site for further information: www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/SmartGrowth/

SETTLE DOWN WITH A GOOD BOOK: LWVC BOOK CLUB

On December 8th we return to historical fiction, to Renaissance Italy and to a portrait of a "brave and brilliant woman" for a tale of love, loss, intrigue and more. Based on two actual letters, *The Secret Book of Grazia dei Rossi* by Jacqueline Park, professor emeritus of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, illuminates a time long past – but yet timeless. Join us on Monday, December 8th, 7:30 PM, at Martha Brookes, 3560 NW Harrison. 753–1417. Please call Martha to let her know if you'll be coming.

Meetings are scheduled for the second Monday of the month. Upcoming books include:

- January 12: *Feast of Love* by Charles Baxter
- February 9: *Founding Brothers* by Joseph J. Ellis
- March 8: *Winter Wheat* by Mildred Walker
- April 12: *The Power of One* by Bryce Courtenay
- May 10: *The Inextinguishable Symphony* by Martin Goldsmith

For more information about the LWVC Book Club, call Corrine Gobel, 745–7736, cgobeli@aol.com.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please join me in welcoming new members Susan Johnson, Kathy Heath and Lo Erna Simpson to LWVC!

- ◆ **Susan Johnson** was director of the Corvallis Arts Center for ten years and is now pursuing a full-time art career. She is involved with galleries in Portland and on the Oregon coast. She has lived in the community for over 40 years and has five grandchildren in the area.
- ◆ **Kathy Heath** was Assistant Dean of Health and Human Performance at OSU. She retired in 1997 and is co-chair of the Benton County Commission for Children and Families and also is active in Zonta.
- ◆ **Lo Erna Simpson** moved to Corvallis from Lexington, Kentucky in 1986 to teach textile courses in the Apparel, Interior, Housing and Merchandising Department at OSU. She has worked for Nike for the past seven years as an education consultant giving workshops on a weekly basis.

-- Marolyn Welch Tarrant

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT FUND PROPOSAL CONCLUSION

(Continued from "Infrastructure Improvement Fund Proposal" article in November Bulletin)

At the end of our last episode, the Corvallis City Council had held a hearing on a proposal to establish an Infrastructure Improvement Fund, to be funded by a 1% surcharge on city utility bills. Four out of the five citizens who testified spoke against the proposal. The fifth was in favor of the fund but had no opinion on how to raise money for it. The City Council agreed to decide whether or not to proceed with process for implementing the proposal at its meeting on November 3, 2003.

The LWVC Board directed that an ad hoc committee convene to recommend how the League should proceed. The committee met on October 24. Mayor Berg, a longstanding LWV member, joined the latter part of the meeting, during which there was a lively discussion about adequate information as a condition of citizen participation. The committee recommended — and the Board concurred — that the League send a letter to city officials stating its concerns about the lack of adequate public process in the city's consideration of the Infrastructure Improvement Fund Proposal and the regressiveness of the proposed surcharge on city utility bills. The text of the letter follows.

Mayor Helen Berg, City Manager Jon Nelson and City Councilors:

The League of Women Voters of Corvallis has long been interested in openness in government and fair taxation. We have studied these issues in depth, leading to the development of League principles and positions at both the state and local levels. The Infrastructure Improvement Fund concept, as described in the letter to interested stakeholders from Jon Nelson on September 18, 2003 and on which the City Council conducted a public hearing on October 20, raises serious concerns with respect to both these issues.

Although Mr. Nelson's letter gives examples of possible uses for the proposed infrastructure fund, the formal statement of purpose is not specific enough to give us a clear idea of how the fund would actually be used. Accordingly, we cannot express an opinion on the fund itself.

The proposed method of raising money for the fund through a 1% rate increase on city utility bills is another matter. Such an increase would have nothing to do with the costs of producing or delivering the services and products covered by the rates. It is therefore a sales tax.

The League's position on sales taxes is unequivocal; "The League supports the adoption of a sales tax provided...regressivity is reduced through a tax credit or rebate and exemptions for items such as food, medicines, rent and utilities" (emphasis added). The proposed fundraising method is in fundamental conflict with this position.

Our second concern relates to the public process related to citizen involvement. One of the principles of the League of Women Voters states, "that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible."

We are concerned about an apparent lapse in the case at hand. Although taxes and water rates are of concern to all Corvallis citizens, notice of the public hearing on October 20 was sent to fewer than 100 interested stakeholders. The agenda item title, "Infrastructure Improvement Fund Concept" gives no clue to the reader of the tax proposal that lies beneath.

The September 18 letter states, "If the City Council decides at their November 3 meeting to proceed, then the following tasks would occur..." The list that follows contains no mention of further decision points or further opportunities for public input. It is all about implementation.

In a meeting with League members on October 24, Mayor Berg gave verbal assurances that if a decision to proceed is made on November 3, the process will be lengthy, with ample opportunities for public involvement. Before any further decisions are made by the City Council, we urge that the detailed process be presented in writing to the public and that it clearly show key decision points and opportunities for public information and participation.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Karen Nibler
President, LWV Corvallis*

The prevailing view to emerging from the November 3 City Council discussion was that a surcharge on utility bills was not an appropriate means of funding the proposal. Moreover, in the absence of an alternative funding mechanism, there was little point in proceeding further. The Council confirmed this conclusion by a vote of 5 (Brauner, Empol, Griffiths, Werschow, Zimbrick) to 2 (Gandara, Grosch).

— Walter Barkan

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR *EASY TO READ* VOTERS' GUIDE FOR NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION

Are you especially interested in adult literacy or voter outreach to immigrant communities? We could use your help with the *Easy To Read Voters' Guide* that we are planning to produce in cooperation with Oregon Literacy, Inc. and Hands On Portland. There are tasks for writers, editors, and reviewers. General material could be translated into easy to read formats whenever volunteers have time. Ballot measure information will need review in late summer. We could also use help developing speaker's bureau training materials that are sensitive to the needs of people with less education and/or limited English literacy. You could also work in your community to identify places to distribute the *Easy to Read Voters' Guide*. To volunteer, please contact the LWVOR office or Judy Davis, Voters' Guide Editor, at rjdavis@gorge.net or 541-478-0133.

--- Pat Bishop



www.lwv.corvallis.or.us

is all you have to remember...

Our Corvallis LWV website is linked to the

- City of Corvallis
- Corvallis School District 509J
- Benton County
- State
- LWVOR
- LWVUS

"BIG BOX" LAND USE APPLICATIONS TO BE REVIEWED BY CITY IN DECEMBER

In December, the City of Corvallis Planning Commission will be reviewing two separate "big box" land use applications. The LWVC is preparing a position on these applications; more information about this position will be provided in the next Bulletin. For further information about the LWVC's position, contact LWVC member Liz Frenkel at 754-6790, lizbobfrenkel@proaxis.com. Additional information about these applications is available from the City's Planning Division (766-6908).

FIRST ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL CONFERENCE ON CIVIC EDUCATION

In September, 2003, LWVUS representatives attended a "first annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education" sponsored by a new "Alliance for Representative Democracy." Some information about that event follows.

The participants at the First Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education acknowledged that there is an urgent need to address the low level of civic engagement in America. We recognize that:

- *Civic knowledge and engagement are essential to maintaining our representative democracy. While many institutions help to develop Americans' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, schools must have the capacity to prepare students for engaged citizenship. Civic education should be a central purpose of education essential to the well-being of representative democracy.*
- *Civic education should be seen as a core subject. Well-defined state standards and curricular requirements are necessary to ensure that civic education is taught effectively at each grade level from kindergarten through 12th grade. Strengthening the civic mission of schools must be a shared responsibility of the public and private sectors at the community, local, state, and national levels.*
- *Policies that support quality teacher education and professional development are important to ensure effective classroom instruction and raise student achievement.*
- *Well-designed classroom programs that foster an understanding of fundamental constitutional principles through methods such as service teaming, discussion of current events, or simulations of democratic processes and procedures are essential to civic education.*

In recognition of these findings, we resolve to take action to reaffirm the historic civic mission of our schools.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS WANTED

Some of our members do not have cars or rides to evening meetings. If you would be willing to provide a ride to the December 9 meeting -- or any future LWVC meetings -- please send your name and phone number to niblerk@comcast.net or kathyseeburger@comcast.net. We will print your name and phone number in our motor pool to call for a lift to the meeting. Of course, if you know someone who needs a ride, you can call that person directly. Help a fellow member – thanks!

Upcoming Events: November 2003

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| Dec 8 | LWVC Book Club, 7:30 PM, Martha Brookes', 3560 NW Harrison |
| Dec 9 | Program Planning meeting and potluck, 5:30 – 9 PM, Unitarian Church, 2945 NW Circle Boulevard |
| Dec 16 | Board meeting, 4 – 7 PM, Karen Nibler's, 2750 DeArmond |
| Jan 13 | LWVC program meeting, 7 PM, (program topic to be announced) |
| Jan 22–24 | Smart Growth Conference, Portland |
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