

The **VOTER**

Vol. 54, No. 1

The Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Kent

January 2007

Kent League Needs Your Input at Program Planning Session

Break the February blues, and join fellow Kent League members for some stimulating conversation—about education or elections or other statewide issues you care about. It's all an effort to prepare for the state League's annual convention, held this year in our own backyard this spring in Akron.

Each year, the League of Women Voters of Ohio selects public policy priorities from among its position statements, which previously were developed through a consensus process among local League members across the state. The Kent League's local program planning meeting is set for February 8 at the home of League member Roberta O'Keefe, 970 Cottage

Gate Drive, Kent. Start time is 7 p.m. League member Gail Pytel will moderate the discussion. Wine and cheese will be provided, so it's not all work and no play.

Members are invited and encouraged to attend this important session. It's your chance to have input about which issues the state League will focus on this year. So put on your thinking cap, and come to the meeting brimming with suggestions.

When considering possible issues for study, take the following questions into account:

- Is this issue politically relevant? Does it need government action? Will it have long-term impact?

- Will League members and the community be interested and supportive? Is there a need for the issue to be addressed?
- Can the League be effective on this issue? Does it fall within the League's principles?
- Will there be opportunities for effective League education and action?
- Are there sufficient members and resources to carry through such a study?

The input compiled at the planning meeting will be for-

See *PLANNING*, p. 3.

Town Hall Meeting Yields Community Opinions on Governing, Elections

Nearly 100 area residents came to express their views on government accountability and election law reform at a town hall meeting in mid November of last year.

Twenty-minute small-group roundtables were held on each of the topics. The goal of each discussion was to engage fellow community members and generate ideas to help them feel connected to government and for government to run more efficiently and effectively.

On the issue of accountability, many participants expressed a lack of trust in government and the media. The citizens feel there is a lack

See *TOWN HALL*, p. 2.



LWVK **Events** **Alert . . .**

Thursday, February 8, 7 p.m.

Program Planning meeting; wine and cheese provided; home of League member Roberta O'Keefe, 970 Cottage Gate Drive, Kent

Inside . . .

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| From the President's Desk | 2 |
| LWVK 2007 Finance Drive | 3 |
| LWVO Sunshine Week Plans | 4 |
| LWVO Advocacy Agenda | 5 |
| Calendar | 6 |



From the President's Desk:

Membership... Program Planning... Immigration Study... Voters' Guide

It's an exciting time for the Kent League as we begin a new year with high hopes and a long list of "want to do's"—but isn't that always the case with the League?

High on our list is to encourage each of you to make a New Year's resolution to ask at least one person to consider joining the League of Women Voters and then bring that person to the February 24 "A (Bipartisan) Afternoon of Chat," the annual membership recruitment meeting.

As we all "age" gracefully, we know we can't move everything ourselves. We could use some more help in the League. If we each take a little piece of the work and fun, we'll all have made a difference in how democracy works in this area. Never hesitate to call me or Vicki Kline if you have any ideas or news we can use. Again, if you ask, they will join! Our "bites" this spring include:

- An exciting program planning meeting on February 8 at the home of Roberta and Lloyd O'Keefe, 970 Cottage Gate, Kent (330/673-2058). We will start with wine and then discuss whether the League's state

and local positions should stay the same, be restudied or be abandoned. Under the leadership of Gail Pytel, committee members for this important League function are Vicki Kline, Kady Pownall and Pat Sattler.

- We are also starting the first national study the League has sponsored in quite a while. The Kent League will join hundreds of other Leagues across the country in this two-year look at immigration. Study is important as it is the only way the League takes a national stand. Amie Cajka (330/688-9545) has assembled a great volunteer study committee but could always use another study-buddy. On the committee now are Roberta and Lloyd O'Keefe, Jane Rose, Deb Newberry and Cathy Mansor.
- We will be doing a *Voters' Guide* for the May 8 primary. Dozens of issues plus many city council-type elections will be on the ballot. We need your help with the guide. Please call me to volunteer two to four hours. That's it! Promise!

- Barb

TOWN HALL

Continued from p. 1

of transparency in government. Many feel alienated from the system and cannot adequately participate in government. The following ideas were suggested as ways to help the government be more accountable to the people and to help people feel more connected to their government:

- *Educate the public.* Stressing civic duty to high school students would help to prepare them for participating in government.
- *Limit the amount spent on elections.* Limiting campaign ex-

penditures could level the playing field between candidates and create more competitive elections.

- *Equal media time for both parties/candidates.* Allocating equal time for radio and television advertising for the different parties or candidates would help to create a more honest and less biased election.
- *Publish reports of officeholders.* Publishing or posting online reports of how officeholders vote on issues, spend campaign money and where they receive money would

See TOWN HALL, p. 3.

The **VOTER** is published eight to 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Kent. The newsletter is available both in print and online at the League's Web site: <http://www.kent.oh.lwvnet.org/>.

Board Members

Barb Hipsman-Springer
Co-President

330/678-0681
bhipsman@kent.edu

Vicki Kline
Co-President

330/842-2782
vicki.kline@pl.com

Secretary
Vacant

Nena Hankins
Treasurer

330/673-0128
nhankins@att.net

Call the co-presidents to volunteer to help with program meetings or committees or to get information about the League's activities and policies.

Directors

Tracy Deep-Ross
Membership

Jackie Waltz
Finance

Kathy Hardy
Programs

Gail Pytel
Programs

Stacy Yaniglos
Programs

Terrie Tarchinski Nielsen
Voter Service

Amie Cajka
Immediate Past President

Jan Rusnack
Past President/Adviser

Directors set policy and make financial decisions and are involved in programs, voter service and organizational activities of the League.

Off-Board Leaders

Nancy Adams
Land-Use Programs

Vicki Kline
Voter's Guide

Audrey Cielinski Kessler
Voter & Web Site

Jan Rusnack
Voter Registration

LWVK 2007 Finance Drive Kicks Off

The Kent League of Women Voters' 2007 Finance Drive, a campaign to raise funds that help the organization maintain its programming, has received a total of \$1,345 as of January 10. Of that total, \$720 went to the League; \$625 went to the League's Education Fund.

Credit for this accomplishment goes to Finance Committee Chair Jackie Waltz.

The following contributors have given their permission to list their names in League publications:

- Sherry Joy
- John J. Flynn
- Doris Brown
- Terry E. Miller
- Doris Aeschliman
- Anita & Leigh Herington
- Fred DuBois - DuBois Book Store
- Carol Lockart
- Patricia Smouse

- Kevin T. Poland
- Ed Whitehouse
- Keith & Monalee Ewing
- Dr. Emilio Ferrara
- Joyce & Dan McCombs
- Home Savings Bank
- Titus Jackman

Thank you to all who have contributed so far. Member contributions to the finance drive are critical to the League's work as a community organization. Please consider making a donation—in any amount, large or small!

Complete the form below, and mail your contribution today to the address on the form. Be sure to check the line if you want your name listed in *The VOTER* as a contributor (always without the amount given). The deadline for contributions is February 28.

Send referrals of possible donors to Waltz (see form for address).

PLANNING

Continued from p. 1

warded to the state board to add to other Leagues' opinions. Priority issues for 2007 are then determined. This allows the state League to target its advocacy efforts and its volunteer lobby corps in a consensus direction. Members and lobbyists will then set about contacting policymakers, speaking as the voice of a broad and diverse grassroots membership of Ohioans.

Through one-on-one contact, testimony at public hearings, and media advocacy, the League of Women Voters of Ohio helps make democracy work. So be sure to mark your calendar for February 8.

For more information about the state League's advocacy agenda for 2007, see the article on p. 4.

TOWN HALL

Continued from p. 2

help inform citizens about and include them in the political process.

- *Air council meetings on public access TV.* Allowing the public to watch meetings on TV would increase openness and include citizens.
- *Post minutes of meetings.* Posting minutes of meetings online would increase openness and help the public to stay involved in politics and follow the issues important to them.
- *Print congressional records in newspapers.* Printing congressional records in newspapers would allow the public to monitor the policies that mat-

See TOWN HALL, p. 4.

LWVK 2007 Member Finance Drive Contribution Form

Contribution Amount: \$25 ___ \$50 ___ \$75 ___ \$100 ___ Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

— Yes. List my name as a contributor in the local VOTER (contribution amount will not be published). **For contributions to be tax deductible, the check must be made out to LWV Ohio Education Fund.** Donations go into a state account for use by the Kent League.

Please make your check, money order or cashier's check payable to League of Women Voters of Kent (unless made out to LWVO Education Fund for tax deduction), and mail to Jackie Waltz, 4564 Hattrick Road, Rootstown, OH 44272.

LWVUS Announces Its Plans for Participation in Sunshine Week

The League of Women Voter of the U.S. is partnering with other organizations in a kick-off event for Sunshine Week on March 12 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The program, titled "Closed Doors; Open Democracies?", will include a panel discussion, audience questions and ideas for action. The event will be webcast to sites around the country.

The goal is to share this discussion among national experts with local communities, providing them with material to educate the public on this important issue. In most cases, libraries will be the local host sites. Other organizational cosponsors are being sought. If your League is interested in participating, contact OpenTheGovernment.org Program Associate Emily Feldman at efeldman@openthegovernment.org. To let the national League's Education Fund know that your local League is interested in participating, contact Theresa Cummings at tcummings@lwv.org. The Kent League has volunteered to partner with the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Details are being worked out.

Materials to use during Sunshine Week are available from the national League's Education Fund. The "Looking for Sunshine" toolkit (publication number 2077) and the "Are You Safer in the Dark?" DVD from last year's National Press Club Sunshine Week event can be ordered through the League office or downloaded from the Sunshine Week Web site at www.sunshineweek.org.

TOWN HALL

Continued from p. 3

ter to them and keep abreast of what their representatives are doing about those policies.

- *Release the full text of proposals.* Releasing full texts of proposed bills would help constituents see why their representatives voted for or against them and know exactly what was included with the main issue.
- *Explain proposals to the public.* Providing detailed layman explanations of bills would help citizens to critically evaluate policies and stay informed.
- *Adhere to sunshine laws at all levels of government.* Many expressed their concerns regarding the lack of openness at various levels of government.

Many people were interested in election law reform, as our meeting was one week after the midterm election. The following ideas were generated regarding election law reform:

- *Clarify ID laws.* Voter identification laws had been changed several times and were unclear to many before the midterm election.
- *Audit DRE (direct recording electronic) voting machines.* Protection from fraud with the new technology and random audits of machines would help to ease the fear of fraud.
- *Encourage young people to vote.* Having a program for children and young adults to "vote" by casting a mock ballot during elections would help them form the habit of civic activity and stay involved in current events.

See TOWN HALL, p. 6.



League of Women Voters of Ohio Advocacy Agenda 2007

Education

The League supports equitable financing and uniform educational standards for public elementary and secondary schools, advocates for affordable access to public higher education, and opposes the use of public funds for nonpublic schools. We seek:

- A funding system for public elementary and secondary education that is adequate, equitable, accountable, and responsive to the taxpayers.
- State education standards that are developed in a timely and open process, include appropriate multiple forms of assessment, and apply to all schools. The League recommends adoption of a uniform statewide performance evaluation tool.
- The use of public funds only for public schools. The League believes that federal funds should not be used to support nonpublic schools through tuition tax credits, and state funds should not be used to support non-public schools through tuition tax credits, voucher programs, transportation reimbursements, administrative cost reimbursements, or auxiliary funds.

See AGENDA, p. 5.

AGENDA

Continued from p. 4

- Improved accountability and performance of community (charter) schools, as users of public funds, by requiring that they be sponsored by elected boards of education and comply with all state standards.
- Access to affordable higher education for all qualified Ohioans.

Elections and Voting

The League supports election administration and campaign finance reform. Key measures include:

- Nonpartisan administration of elections, effective voting systems and procedures, clear and adequate rules and training for election officials, and better voter education to assure elections that are fair, honest, transparent, and trusted.
- Monitoring and advocacy for full and timely disclosure, enforcement and reform of campaign financing.
- Independent redistricting/reapportionment procedures.
- Repeal of legislative term limits.
- Improved policies that ensure the public's right to know and that promote citizen participation in the political process.

Justice and Community Safety

The League supports a restorative juvenile justice system, citizens' rights, gun control, reproductive rights and abolition of the death penalty. Goals include:

- A juvenile justice system with appropriate care and protection for the satisfactory physical, mental, and educational development of children in the juvenile justice system.
- Strong gun control measures at the state and federal level.
- Protection of a woman's constitutional right of privacy in making reproductive choices.
- Contraceptive equity legislation.
- Safeguarding of civil and human rights, equality of opportunity, and equal protection under the law.
- Abolition of the death penalty and a moratorium on executions until the death penalty is abolished.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

The League supports policies and programs to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families. We advocate:

- Federal reauthorization and appropriate state implementation of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.
- A strong workforce development system that pro-

vides training, support services, and jobs leading to self sufficiency.

- Assessment of the impact of tax reform on the state's ability to provide basic human services.
- Affordable and accessible health care for all, including mental health services.
- Protection of the structural integrity in existing mandatory entitlement programs, including Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, while better meeting basic human needs in a cost-effective way.
- Protection of the comprehensive structure of the Head Start program.
- Sustainability for affordable housing programs at the state and federal levels.
- Greater protection for consumers from predatory lending practices.
- Opposition to laws or constitutional amendments requiring formula-based revenue or spending limits at the state or local level.

Natural Resources

The League supports responsible and responsive management of our natural resources. We advocate:

- A permanent ban on drilling for oil and gas under Lake Erie.
- Federal and state funding to help sustain Lake Erie.
- Reauthorization of the Clean Ohio Fund.
- Policies that provide protection of state parks, wilderness areas, wetlands, and state forest from exploitation of natural resources.
- Strong operational measures to regulate and reduce entities that contribute to air pollutants.
- Emphasis on reclamation, reduction, and proper storage of solid and hazardous waste.
- A renewed emphasis on recycling of solid and hazardous waste; commercial, industrial, and residential.
- Responsible interbasin transfer of water that includes public participation in the decision-making process.
- Protection of water quality by promoting best known farming practices and preventing contamination by confined animal feeding operations.
- Policies that sanction smart growth, urban revitalization, rural zoning, and farmland preservation.
- Alternative incentives for historic preservation.
- Energy policies that provide environmental protection for air and water quality.
- Alternative forms of energy at the commercial, industrial, and residential level

TOWN HALL

Continued from p. 4

- *Register voters through property or income tax filings.* Automatically registering anyone who files property or income taxes would increase the number of registered voters and possibly increase civic engagement. Automatically registering all 18-year-olds also was suggested.
- *Register voters on Election Day.* Offering Election Day registration as in Wisconsin and Minnesota could increase voter turnout.
- *Create a national or official holiday for elections.* Making Election Day a holiday would increase voter turnout and make it easier for citizens to get to the polls or volunteer to be poll workers.
- *Oversee campaign advertising.* Board of Election oversight would help to create a more honest, positive election climate.
- *Fund voting machines.* Funding voting machines at the federal or state level would help to satisfy county/precinct needs for adequate voting machines.

The VOTER

Audrey Cielinski Kessler, Editor
1638 S. Lincoln Street
Kent, OH 44240-4449



LWVK

Coming

Attractions . . .

February

- 8 Kent League Board Meeting**
To be held 30 minutes before the program planning meeting.
- 8 Program Planning Meeting**
Home of League member Roberta O'Keefe; 970 Cottage Gate Drive, Kent; wine and cheese provided; 7 p.m. (details, see p. 1).
- 24 Membership Meeting**
Bring a friend to join the League; home of League member Karen Fuller; 1431 River Edge Blvd.; refreshments provided; 3 p.m.-5 p.m.