

The Voter

LWVUS MISSION

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

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LWVSC President's Report, 2014-2015

At this time last year the organizational structure of the LWVSC was riddled with holes. We had no Voter Service, Observer Corps, or Land Use Committee chair, and later when Valerie Meisel moved west, we lost our Treasurer and Membership chair. Now, as I review yearly reports of activities and events, I am amazed at how much the LWVSC has accomplished!



Jane Lord, President

Beginning with **Voter Service** in the summer, volunteers set up registration tables at seven different events, including several underserved neighborhoods. Carol Jones moderated seven **Candidates' Forums** during the year. Martha Redmond organized four **School Board Candidates' Forums**. Janet Orlando coordinated the VOTE 411 website for the state while Pat Makos covered Sussex County. All of this happened without a Voter Service chair—members stepped up, pitched in, and got things done.

Meanwhile, Sandy Spence facilitated the **Land Use Committee** until Sue Claire Harper took over the reins. This growing, vibrant committee has held seven public forums this year, covering all voting districts in Sussex County.

In the fall and spring, Anne Riley collaborated with organizations that deal with **Water and Sea Level Rise** issues and organized two highly successful events – the “Love our Inland Bays” dinner with Governor Markell and the coastal bus tour.

Carole Somers continued to keep the **Observer Corps** going, mentoring observers until Janet Ambrose and Martha Redmond signed on as co-chairs—each of them bringing new vigor and vitality to the Board.

We also co-sponsored forums and programs focusing on current issues spanning the local, state, and national levels: The Black Experience in Delaware with the LWVDE, a Pay Equity program with the LWVDE, AAUW, and the DE Commission on Women, the Money in Politics Luncheon with Common Cause and the LWVDE, the *New Jim Crow* discussion series with St. Peters, and Great Decisions with the Unitarian Universalists.

These activities, along with our fall Membership Orientation Meeting, monthly Board Meetings, Fun Lunches, and our Annual Meeting, come to a **total of 37 activities** for

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the year—several of which involved a *series* of meetings rather than a single event.

How did this happen when we began the year with a structure that looked like Swiss cheese? Unlike hierarchal organizations with rigid divisions, our League relies on grassroots cooperation. Members who plan and organize one event show up to help with other events. Members come out to welcome guests, to set up and clean up, and to take care of details in between.

Throughout the year, we've relied on Jo Klinge and her **Communications Committee** to keep us connected; on Janet Denman, our new **Membership Committee** chair, to keep us viable; and on Carole Somers, **Nominating Committee** chair to assure continuity.

Our officers have kept us on course. VP Jo Klinge has been my right arm. Michele Tashman's clear and concise minutes have kept us straight on where we've been and where we're going. Treasurer Lorna Dempsey has organized our finances, kept records current and available, and initiated the process of incorporating the LWVSC.

Our organization began as the League of Women Voters of Laurel in 1957. We became the League of Women Voters of Sussex County in 1976. Now, 39 years later, we will add the “Inc.”

Heartfelt thanks to all of you who hit the ground running – planning, organizing, creating programs, attending to details, lugging equipment, and shuttling our banners from one car trunk to another. You make me proud and honored to represent the LWVSC!

Jane Lord

Key Dates to Remember

Date	Event	Location
6/30/2015	Observer Corps Report	County Council
7/8/2015	State Advocacy Corps	Legislative Hall, Dover
7/10/2015	Board Meeting	Lavender Fields, Milton

For more information see calendar on www.sussexlwv.org

Meet LWVSC officers for 2025-16

At the May 2015 annual meeting, we welcomed our new officers, picture below.



Lorna Dempsey, Treasurer; Martha Redmond, Secretary; Jane Lord, President; and Marie Mayor, Vice President

Jane Lord will continue as President providing LWVSC with her continued strength and guidance to keep the league focused and moving forward. Joining Jane are three newly elected officers, who are no strangers to our League, but who bring a fresh set of ideas for meeting her mission. Lorna Dempsey, as Treasurer, brings her understanding of finance to get and keep us economically sound. Martha Redmond brings her enthusiasm and focused organization skills to the role of Secretary. Completing the slate is Marie Mayor, with her deep understanding of Sussex County politics and drive for public service to the role of Vice President. We welcome you all and will support you throughout your term.

Committee Report: School Board Forum

Every resident of Delaware has a vested interest in their local school system. In addition to paying local school taxes, the state spends 29% of our tax dollars on education. A portion of our federal tax money also goes towards the local school system. Yet sadly attendance at local school board meetings is minimal. School board voter turnout is the lowest of all elections, in some cases 10% of voters.



Martha Redmond, School Board Forum Chair

During the past League year, the school board observers attended local school board meetings and kept abreast of the issues and areas of concern. We passed this information on to the LWVSC Board. The Board then decides whether there is a need to develop educational forums about local issues for the public and, if so, to make it happen.

We were present when the health curriculum was being developed for the Indian River School District (IRSD). We observed that this contentious issue was handled in a fair and equitable manner.

We recently held School Board Candidate Forums in four local school districts of Sussex County. In two of these districts a School Board Candidates Forum had never been held before. The forums were covered by the local press and praised by the candidates and attendees.

In the coming year we plan to address the issues of growth in the school districts, as well as diversity in the school system. The Smarter Balance Testing is being used for the first time to assess the students' knowledge using the new core curriculum standards.

If you are interested in these or other educational issues, please join the School Board Committee by contacting Martha Redmond at sussexlww@gmail.com. *Our children are our future.*

Committee Report: Land Use

On January 22, 2015, the LWVSC Land Use Committee presented the video "An Evolving Legacy: Delaware's Coastal Zone Act" to an overflow crowd at Beebe's Conference Center in Rehoboth. The video outlined the formidable challenges facing Governor Russell Peterson over 40 years ago as he sought to enact legislation to protect Delaware's largely pristine coastline from industrial development. Following the video, attorney Ken Kristl, Director of the Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic at Widener University, challenged those assembled to apply similar dedication to the land use challenges facing Sussex County. The response from those in attendance was overwhelmingly positive.



Leslie Ledogar presenting at a Land Use Meeting

With the encouragement and support of LWVDE advocacy chair Sandy Spence, the LWVSC Land Use Committee drafted a plan to educate the public on their role in crafting land use policy in Sussex County. With the state mandated 2018 Comprehensive Plan on the horizon, it was decided that workshop forums would be held on this topic in each of the five councilman districts.

On March 18th, a "kick-off" forum entitled "Educating the Public for the Comprehensive Plan" was held at County Council Chambers in Georgetown. Four speakers addressed different aspects of this topic. The focus of the subsequent five workshop meetings was threefold: to educate the public on the purpose and components of the county's comprehensive plan, to solicit their concerns regarding land use issues in their communities, and to stress the need for all county residents to make their land use concerns known to their elected Council representatives.

At a public meeting of the Sussex County Council this summer, Land Use chair Sue Claire Harper will present a summary of residents' land use concerns gleaned during those workshop sessions.

We are now in the process of reorganizing the LWVSC Land Use Committee for the 2015-16 calendar year, again planning programs to be held throughout the county in the months leading up to the drafting and adoption of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

We welcome to our committee anyone interested in the myriad of Land Use Issues affecting Sussex County. We



Bob Wheatly, Planning and Zoning
Commissioner

can assure you that, whatever your talents, you will find satisfaction in helping to educate the public and advocate for sound land use policy. Our next planning meeting will be held on a Tuesday evening on June 16 from 7-9 PM with the following agenda:

1. Discussing citizen feedback and issues of concern presented during the LWVSC Spring Land Use and Comprehensive Plan Workshops/Forums.
2. Identifying the focus for the September 2015 – June 2016 Land Use Committee Workshop/Forums.

If you are interested in signing up to be a member of the Land Use Committee or, if you are no longer interested in being an active member of the committee, please send Sue Claire an email at sussexlww@gmail.com.

Committee Report: Water & Sea Level Rise



E. Ann Riley, Water & Sea
Level Rise Chair

As we know, three-fourths of Earth's surface is water, but 97.5% is too salty to drink. Fresh water is only 2.4% of Earth's total water. The total amount of water can NEVER change but how that fixed amount gets spread around does change and is determined by the clouds. These facets affect our groundwater, including our drinking water. They are also related to the rate of Sea Level Rise.

The Water and Sea Level Rise Committee conducted the following major events:

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- **Sea Level Rise Adaptation Workshop:** This was a presentation by Kenneth T. Kristl, Esq. held on May 15, 2014, at the South Coastal Library in Bethany. Co-sponsored with the Inland Bays Foundation (IBF). LWVSC did the advertising and hosted an exhibit table. The event was well attended.
- **Sea Level Rise Impacts on Our Community:** This seminar was held on September 17, 2014, during SLR Awareness Week on Pilottown Rd. It was co-sponsored by Surfrider Foundation, LWVSC, Center for the Inland Bays (CIB), and IBF. The seminar comprised six presentations. LWVSC provided advertising. The seminar was attended by 80 people.
- **Coast Day:** On October 15, 2014, LWVSC hosted an exhibit table in General Exhibit tent. In addition to information on sea level rise, we provided voter registration information materials.
- **Love Our Inland Bays Dinner:** On October 14, 2014, LWVSC and Inland Bays Foundation co-sponsored a

dinner with Governor. Markell at Irish Eyes. It was a huge success, with more than 140 people attending. IBF and LWVSC presented Gov. Markell with an award for his *Clean Water for Delaware's Future initiative*. In addition to being a lot of fun for all attendees; it was a very successful fund raiser for both LWVSC and IBF. The two organizations collaborated and worked through their differences to deliver a successful dinner that benefited both groups. One lesson learned for future events like this, LWVSC needs to improve coverage of the event and follow-up coverage through better coordination with the media – newspapers, radio, and television.

- **Pollution & Coastal Zone Act Sites Bus Tour:** In celebration of Earth Month, LWVSC sponsored a bus tour on April 17, 2015. The tour consisted of 13 sites covering: storm water, wastewater plants, poisoned drinking water, power plant emissions and sludge, a chicken plant, a pickle plant, two outfalls, a sediment forebay, a brownfield, and a superfund. The 49 passenger bus was sold out and a small profit was realized. Each participant received a folder with eleven handouts of a factual or historical nature and an evaluation form. The participants also enjoyed the video, "An Evolving Legacy," which describes the effort of former Delaware Governor Russell Peterson to conceive of the need for and successfully enact the Coastal Zone Act. The evaluations were outstanding and the passengers seemed interested in another similar bus tour.

Effective in May, this committee will be chaired by Nancy Cabrera-Santos. For more information and to participate in the Water and Sea Level Rise Committee, please contact her at sussexlww@gmail.com.

Committee Report: Observer Corps

As part of the League of Women Voters' support for openness in government, the Observer Corps monitors the county governmental bodies for issues of importance to the League and to Sussex County. The Observer Corps was organized in January of 2009. We have now completed our sixth year of activity. Observers attend County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission meetings. Observers complete reports of the meetings they observe and forward them to the coordinator for compilation. Monthly reports of findings are presented to the Board of Directors where decisions are made regarding any needed follow-up. An annual report of findings is made to the Council every spring.

An issue which was addressed this year due to the observations of our members was the decision by County Council to change the period for Public Comment at meetings. While time for public comment had been scheduled to occur before the Council adjourned for executive session, this time was abruptly changed to occur after the executive session. Since it was never known how long the executive sessions would last, members of the public usually left the meeting. The time for Public Comment was therefore quite meaningless. After objections to this new practice were raised, the Council revised

its schedule to allow for Public Comment at the beginning of the meetings. This continues to be the current practice.

The Observer Corps is an important function of the League. If you are interested in becoming an Observer, please contact Janet Ambrose at sussexlww@gmail.com for further information. Serving as an Observer is an excellent way to become familiar with the functioning of Sussex County government. Volunteering to observe, even once monthly, will be of great help to the League in monitoring activities of local government.

Committee Report: Membership

The Membership Committee welcomes the following new members in 2015:

- Thomas Adams
- Michela Coffaro
- Tom DiOrio
- Patricia Drago
- Rose Mary Hendrix
- Leslie Ledogar
- Kathy McGuiness
- Jan McKenzie
- Jo Ann Paulson
- Mary Lu Pool
- Nancy Powell
- Bob Wheatley
- Bud Zimmerman



Janet Denman, Membership Chair

Thank you for bringing your talent and passion to the League as we continue working on Voter Issues and Sustainable Communities in Sussex County and Delaware. You have told us that the issues you care about are Land Use, Water and Sea Level Rise, Transparency in Government (County Council, in particular) and Death Penalty Repeal. We share your passion and look forward to all we can accomplish together. For more information contact Janet Denman, Membership Chair at sussexlww@gmail.com.

Committee Report – Communication



Jo Klinge, Communications Chair

The Communications Committee continues to monitor and support the various means by which the League maintains contact with its members and interfaces with the external world.

The forums of the Land Use Committee and the School Board elections have increased our visibility and press coverage throughout the county.

The Communications Committee manages a wide range of format, as follows:

- Website: Janet Orlando
 - Public: www.sussexlww.org
- Facebook: Sandy Spence
 - lwwscde@groups.facebook.com
- Twitter: Cathy Thompson
 - @SussexLWV

- Press Releases: Cornelia Melvin, Jo Klinge
 - sussexlww@gmail.com
- Email eBlasts: Wyn Achenbaum
 - sussexlww@gmail.com
- The Voter newsletter: Jo Klinge and Suzanne Hain
- PA system and banners custodian: Martha Redmond

The Gmail address is given in press releases, publicity or public announcements so that our personal information is not widely broadcast. That account is monitored frequently and messages forwarded to the appropriate person. There is an LWVSC announcement account to be used to forward messages from co-sponsors.

Please remember to send all press release and calendar notices to Jo Klinge and Cornelia Melvin **at least two weeks in advance**. Draft all press releases in MS Word and provide photos in JPG format. There can be no headings, headlines or authors. Photographers can be noted but need not be. To maintain the League's image, it is imperative that ALL communications with media should come through the Communications Chair, Jo Klinge.

We are working on delivering some workshops for members on the use of Google Drive, Gmail, Facebook and Twitter. The first workshop was on Google Drive and was held on June 4. Developed and presented by Janet Orlando and Connie Jones, this hands-on training gave the participants a good introduction for using Google Drive.

How Our Elections Can Work Better for Voters

At the National level, the League of Women Voters is working on improving access to voting in America. Here is an excerpt from an article.

This month, we're marking the 22nd anniversary of the passage of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Commonly referred to as the "Motor Voter Law," the NVRA was passed in 1993 to make it easier for Americans to register to vote.

The League of Women Voters has worked to expand access to the ballot since our founding 95 years ago and we served as a key player in advocating for the NVRA, working for years to ensure its passage and implementation. But there remains so much more to do to make our elections fair, free and accessible.

The League believes that our democracy will be stronger when the American electorate is more representative of the communities we live in. To that end, the League has registered hundreds of thousands of new voters in recent years. The League has also worked in over 20 states in the past decade to defend voting rights when they come under threat. Finally, we're working right now to bring about improvements to make our voting systems more modern and responsive to voters' needs.

Go to this link to learn what you can do to help: <http://lww.org/blog/how-our-elections-can-work-better-voters>

Money in Politics

One of the key programs selected at the National level for the 2015-2016 biennium is "Money in Politics." Three committees have been selected to collect and disseminate information on:

- ✓ Money in Politics
- ✓ Process for Amending the Constitution
- ✓ Redistricting in the States

There are things that LWVSC can do to inform ourselves and our community about these topics that are critical to our democracy. The timeline is as follows

- **Spring 2015:** Education Materials posted on the League Management website. We can use these materials for member and community meetings.
- **Fall 2015:** Study guides and consensus questions for the Money in Politics Review and Constitutional Amendment Study will be posted. We can hold consensus meetings.

- **February 1, 2016:** Send consensus reports to LWVUS
- **April 2016:** LWV will review and approve Consensus Reports and positions (if any) at the national LWV meeting

For information on Money in Politics Review and Constitutional Amendment Study go to the League Management website <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review> .

In addition to information, there is a Forum on the website where members can discuss the issues raised. To stay informed, subscribe to the weekly League Update.

Candid Shots from 2015 LWVSC Events



At the Annual Meeting in Bethany are: Jacqueline Vogel, Marti Austin, Carole Somers, Jo Klinge, and Mack Somers.



Connie Jones and Janet Orlando enjoying each other at a Fun Lunch.



Kanya Miel and Brandon Nixon, two student panelists on the Black History Month Forum sponsored by LWVSC in February.



Martha Redmond and Nancy Cabrera-Santos enjoying a laugh at the May meeting.



Milton participants in Land Use meeting.



Nelia Dolan, Suzanne Hain and Cornelia Melvin attend a fun lunch.