



Missouri Voter

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The League of Women Voters of Missouri

May/June 2018

LWVMO SPRING CONFERENCE



More than 70 LWV members, with representatives from all 8 local Leagues, attended the biennial spring conference, held this year in Kansas City. This was a larger attendance than we have had in recent years, thanks to an excellent program with speakers on several important topics, and organized by a great team of volunteers from Kansas City LWV headed by Evelyn Maddox and Donna Hoch (pictured at left).

Retired Brigadier General W. Christopher King, Ph.D. was the keynote speaker. He spoke on “**Climate Change and National Security**” which he called a critical issue important to all Americans. Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today. Peace needs the maintenance of a stable environment capable of providing for people’s basic human needs in a sustainable way.

General King said there are human induced changes in the environment of such an impact that they pose threats to stability in many places in the world. The World Health Organization has stated that there are as many as two billion people in the world who don’t have clean water. He provided details about several areas in the world that are or will be hugely impacted, including the Nile River basin and the Tibetan Plateau. In sum, we need to analyze the threats and risks posed by climate change.

Jean Maneke, a KCMO attorney, spoke about “**Shining a Light on the Sunshine Law**” in Missouri. She described what Missouri’s Sunshine Law requires for any public body. There are bills currently in the Legislature which would add to enforcement of the law. The Office of Attorney General Josh Hawley has a booklet with information: “Missouri Sunshine Law: Open Meetings and Records Law.” Contact the AG’s office at (573-751-3321) to request a copy.



Following lunch, State president Kathleen Boswell presented the **Rachel Farr Fitch Health Care Award** to the Katy Trail Health Center. The first Rachel Farr Fitch Health Care Award was given in 2002 to Rachel for her steadfast work on the League’s behalf, especially in the case of Blue Cross Insurance going from not-for-profit to a for-profit company. Her health was failing then but we think it pleased her to know that her legacy would live on in the League with this award, which is given on the even-numbered years at state conference (details about this year’s Award recipient on page 3).

Another important topic was addressed by a panel “**Seeking Solutions to Gun Violence.**” Representatives from several organizations, including Loren Stanton from the Brady Campaign Against Gun Violence; Judy Sherry from Grandparents Against Gun Violence; and Amy Walsh from Moms Demand Action. The groups aren’t against gun ownership, but are advocating against gun violence.

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Spring Conference (continued)



The purpose is to educate the community; find common ground; and have a conversation. They look for ways to encourage responsible gun ownership. For example, Grandparents Against Gun Violence distributes gun locks. The Brady Campaign has a gun accident prevention program; they are working toward an assault weapon ban, not just sales, but actually to make ownership of assault weapons illegal. Moms Demand Action is working for common-sense gun legislation. They work to change the conversation from “Take away your gun” to “Are your kids safe from gun violence?”

KC LWV member Linda Smith offered some action suggestions for members: write letters to the editor; at a candidate forum, ask a question about gun safety; hold a forum on the topic; hold up signs outside a gun show.

Anatolij Gelimson provided a demonstration of his website “**Fastdemocracy.com**” which is a remarkable legislative tracking website. You can find bills from every state; follow bills by number or topic; contact legislators directly from the website; and much more. If you are interested in legislation, this website will simplify your life!



Attendees then had an opportunity to participate in one of three different breakout sessions on the topics of “**Fundraising**”, “**League Basics for Everyone**” and “**Useful Technology.**”

Mary Merritt sold \$360 worth of League merchandise, including new socks and playing cards that will be sold at the LWVUS convention in Chicago June 29-July 1. LWV of Kansas City/Jackson/Clay /Platte Counties also had a raffle for four different great items.



Our immense gratitude to Evelyn Maddox, Donna Hoch and the Kansas City members who assisted in making this a very successful conference. Also we extend our sincere appreciation to the Good Shepherd Community of Christ Church which offered an excellent location. See page 7 for a more complete list of those who helped with the event.



Rachel Farr Fitch Award Goes to Katy Trail Community Health Center



The 2018 Rachel Farr Fitch Award was presented to the Katy Trail Community Health Center at the LWVMO Spring Conference in Kansas City on May 5. The organization was nominated for the award by Sedalia-Pettis County League of Women Voters. President Kathleen Boswell presented the award to Katy Trail Community Health CEO Chris Stewart who proudly spoke about how the Health Center began and has expanded over the years.

The Katy Trail Community Health Center began in 2005 as a retired doctor's dream and has grown to a multi-site medical home for more than 20,000 patients annually in Pettis, Saline and Benton counties. Since becoming a federally qualified community health center in 2006, KTHC has filled a need for patients in six counties, with 50% of its patients being Medicaid, 26% uninsured, 7% Medicare and 26% with private insurance. The services offered have expanded to include dental, which includes a van that goes to seven school districts in Pettis and Benton counties, and mental health through a partnership with Pathways Community Health and Burrell. Physical health is addressed in a new facility in Warsaw and a partnership with Lake Regional Health Center in Versailles. Two years ago, KTHC added a Saturday urgent-care clinic to save patients the cost of a trip to the emergency room. This past year, KTCH was awarded a grant of \$131,721 to help battle the opioid epidemic. It was one of 24 grants given in the state. KTCH began with nine employees; the staff has grown to 117 this year.

League Supports Clean Missouri Initiative

More than 1,600 volunteers for the Clean Missouri Initiative gathered 346,956 signatures from Missourians who are ready to have their voices heard. The amount of signatures is more than twice the number required for a proposed amendment to appear on a statewide ballot. The signatures came from all 114 counties and the City of St. Louis.

The initiative would establish these changes in the state Constitution:

- ◆ Change the process and criteria for redrawing state legislative districts during reapportionment.
- ◆ Change limits on campaign contributions that candidates for state Legislature can accept from individuals or entities.
- ◆ Establish a limit on gifts that state legislators and their employees can accept from paid lobbyists.
- ◆ Prohibit state legislators and their employees from serving as paid lobbyists for a period of time.
- ◆ Prohibit political fundraising by candidates for office or members of the state Legislature on state property.
- ◆ Require legislative records and proceedings to be open to the public.

The LWVMO board endorsed the Clean Missouri Initiative in July 2017.



The Supreme Court and the Death Penalty

By Sydell Shayer, LWV chair, Death Penalty

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports the abolition of the death penalty. I was able to present a statement for abolition on the floor of the 2006 national convention that adopted that position.



The Missouri League supports state legislation to end capital punishment. Three bills were introduced in 2018 to abolish the death penalty but they have not gone anywhere nor does it seem likely that they will despite in recent years there seems to have been more support for the end of capital punishment.

Much of the discussion of the U.S. Supreme Court on capital punishment is whether the death penalty violates the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the eighth amendment. It is interesting and telling to look at the views of some of the recent past and present U.S. Supreme Court Judges. Both Justices Thurgood Marshall and William Brennan thought that the death penalty was unconstitutional.

Justice Ruth Ginsburg said “If I had my way there would be no death penalty.” She did not state that she thought it was unconstitutional so she could feel comfortable in influencing cases before the Court. Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor have not stated their views on the death penalty but it is widely believed that they are opposed to it.

Justice Stephen Breyer believes that the death penalty may violate the 8th amendment, recognizing that it is arbitrary, witnesses recant and judges make mistakes. He said most of Europe is now against the death penalty after French President Mitterand took a position of conscience and opposed the death penalty. He doubts that abolition of the death penalty will actually happen here.

Justice Anthony Kennedy said that the last ten people that were executed in Florida spent an average of 29.4 years on death row. He questioned if it was consistent with the administration of the justice system.

Former Justice Sandra Day O’Connor expressed concern about executing the innocent and the need for better representation for the indigent. She noted how European laws are more lenient and that it is important that the United States take international laws into account in examining domestic issues.



Former Justice Antonin Scalia said in 2015 that he “wouldn’t be surprised if the U.S. Supreme Court found the death penalty unconstitutional. He said some of the Court’s decisions relating to the cruel and unusual punishment changes from generation to generation, to comport with “the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society.” Scalia believed that the constitution is not living but dead or as he preferred to put it “enduring.” He said he would decline to take part in a decision to rule for the death penalty if what was being done was immoral.

At one time, former Justice William Powell upheld the constitutionality of the death penalty. However, he came to believe that capital punishment should be abolished. In one particular case he supported the death penalty and later came to believe it was a wrong decision.

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League Files Lawsuit on Federal Motor Voter Violations

The League of Women Voters of Missouri and chapters in Metro St. Louis and Greater Kansas City joined the A. Philip Randolph Institute in filing a lawsuit against the state of Missouri for failing to comply with federal voting rights law that ensures Missourians have access to voter registration and that their registration records are accurately updated. Voting rights watchdogs Dēmos, Advancement Project’s national office, and the ACLU jointly represent the Plaintiffs.

The lawsuit alleges that the Missouri Secretary of State and the state’s motor vehicle agency, the Missouri Department of Revenue (DOR), are flouting their obligations under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)—federal legislation that was designed to streamline the federal voter registration process, improve accessibility to voter registration, and increase the number of qualified voters properly registered. Specifically, the lawsuit alleges that DOR is failing to provide Missouri residents with the opportunity to register and update their registration information during various license and identification card transactions.

In July 2017, the Plaintiffs informed the Missouri Secretary of State and Director of DOR that the state was failing to provide voter registration opportunities required by the NVRA. “We have attempted time and again to engage the State and work to bring DOR into compliance with federal voting rights law,” said Kathleen Boswell, President of the League of Women Voters of Missouri. “While we had hoped to resolve these issues outside of a courtroom, the State’s continual refusal to adjust practices and ensure that DOR is providing Missourians with the opportunity to register as required under federal law has forced today’s course of action.”

The complaint explains that DOR’s violations of federal law are particularly damaging to:

- Missourians who engage in change-of-address transactions in-person, online, or by mail;
- Active duty military personnel and their dependents who apply for, renew, or request a duplicate license or identification card by mail; and
- Certain Missourians, including those over age 65, who conduct in-person license transactions.

Such persons may not be provided the opportunity to register to vote or update their registration information.

“Missourians who change the address on their license or identification card by mail and online are particularly vulnerable to being disenfranchised,” said Sarah Brannon, Senior Staff Attorney for Motor Voter Enforcement at the ACLU. “The NVRA requires that such persons have their voter registration information updated automatically to reflect their new address unless they affirmatively request the update not occur. As it now stands, DOR is not only failing to send address update information to election authorities, but it is not even informing online and mail change-of-address customers that they need to update their voter registration information.”

When the Plaintiffs first informed Missouri that it was failing to meet its obligations under the NVRA, DOR was informing its online change of address customers that they needed to update their voter registration if they had moved, and was providing customers with information on how to do so.

However, the state has actually made its practices worse since that time and removed all references to voter registration in the online change-of-address portal, leaving Missourians without the opportunity to participate in their democracy.

(Continued on page 6)

Minimum Wage Position Approved

At the May 4 meeting, the State Board accepted as the LWVMO position a St. Louis study group's recommendation to support raising the minimum wage to advance self-sufficiency for individuals and families. Local Leagues can now vote to advocate to raise the state's minimum wage, including support for a fall ballot initiative that would raise Missouri's minimum wage to \$12 per hour by 2023.

LWVUS recently decided that its position on Meeting Basic Needs permits state and local Leagues to lobby in support of raising state or local minimum wages or adopting living wage provisions.

St. Louis Co-President Nancy Miller shared living wage calculations for families living in both urban and rural areas of Missouri. An adult with two children in McDonald County would need \$45,862 in annual income or \$25.52 an hour if she was the sole provider working full-time. In St. Louis City, the same adult would need \$56,624 or \$27.22 to support her family. The calculator includes food, child care, housing, medical expenses and transportation costs.

Raise Up Missouri is a statewide campaign to raise the minimum wage in Missouri to \$8.60 in 2019 and then increase by 85 cents a year until it reaches \$12.00 in 2023. For more information on this ballot measure, go to www.raiseupmo.org.



Federal Motor Voter Lawsuit (continued from page 5)

Because low-income individuals move at higher rates, DOR's failure to update voter registration information has serious consequences for Missouri voters who are already marginalized and whose needs often go unmet. Over 580,000 Missourians move within the state each year, including approximately 200,000 who move to a new electoral jurisdiction. When a voter's registration information does not reflect their current address no matter whether they have moved within the county or not, the voter must cast a provisional ballot; and, if a voter has moved to a different election jurisdiction, their vote is discarded entirely. The number of voters who are disenfranchised because their address information has not been updated on the voter rolls is particularly high in the St. Louis and Kansas City areas—where a move inside and outside the city limits results in a change in election jurisdiction.

The Supreme Court and the Death Penalty (continued from page 4)

Former Justice John Paul Stevens said the United States would be much better without the death penalty although he believed that it is constitutional. He was concerned that its implementation has changed over time, it is more arbitrary, it favors prosecutors who are influenced by political considerations, it's too expensive, and the United States is out of step with most countries of the western world. He said the public was skeptical of the death penalty's deterrent effect and the possibility that innocent people might be executed.

In 1993, Justice Harry Blackmun said he was reviewing his views on the death penalty since he was "not sure" that it could be carried out fairly. In 1994 he concluded that the death penalty experiment has failed. He wrote, "From this day forward, I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death."

In the United States only the legislature or executive branch can eliminate the death penalty.

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**2018 CALENDAR**

June 28-July 1: LWVUS, Chicago
 July 20-21: LWVMO State Board Mtg, Mexico

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**Thank you!**

We appreciate all who helped plan and carry out the May 5 Spring Conference to make the day memorable for all who attended. There were a total of 73 member-registrants and each of our eight Missouri Leagues had a member present. We had 43 KCJCP members supporting the Spring Conference.

- Carolyn Weeks merits special mention because she arranged for our use of the Good Shepherd Community of Christ church. Bill Ashley of the church helped us with technical equipment guidance, and other church members were there to help us throughout the day.
- Caroline Arnold was heroic in preparing all pre-registration of members and organizing our registration, and raffle staff: Karen Brown, Riva Capellari, Sherry Templeton, Ann Johnson, Marianne Watson, Jan Cohen, and Sue Scholl. Pat Goodwin organized all prize and raffle drawings.
- Sheryl Eufinger organized our self-catering with help from Jean Ann Kouns, Melodie Armstrong, and MJ McCall to prepare and serve the delicious luncheon.
- Peg Prendergast and Cheryl Barnes kept the technical equipment ready and working for presenters.
- Marli Klum, Louann Miller, Pauline Wasserman, Dawn Wade and Pauline Testerman worked anywhere they were needed throughout the day; Josh Williams, Sandy Eeds, Jack Smith and Lyle Weeks moved tables, chairs, and anything else that was needed, anywhere it was needed.
- Cheryl Barnes was the Event Photographer. Contact Evelyn Maddox to request pictures.
- Anitra Steele contributed enough homemade cinnamon rolls, and MJ McCall contributed enough homemade sheet cake, lemon bars, and Mexican wedding cakes for everyone!
- Pauline Testerman got a good deal for reservations by out-of-towners at nearby Drury Hotel.
- Linda Smith focused on interesting and engaging plenary sessions and breakout sessions.

Please excuse us if we missed anyone who was "hands on" to help plan and carry out the Conference. We appreciate everyone who made the day memorable for all who attended, including Administrative Manager Jean Dugan, the LWVMO Board, and all the LWVMO members who traveled to Kansas City for the day.

— *Evelyn Maddox and Donna Hoch*, Co-Presidents, LWV/Kansas City, Jackson, Clay and Platte Counties



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Memorials and Contributions

Win Colwill made a contribution in memory of Eleanor Goodge to the LWVMO Ed Fund. It was designated for the LWV Columbia-Boone County Education Fund.

Lael Von Holt donated framed photos of suffragettes Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw. They're on display in the St. Louis office.

Contributions, tributes and memorials are always welcome! You can send a donation to: LWVMO, 8706 Manchester Road, Suite 104, St. Louis, MO 63144.



The state board for LWV of Missouri met on Friday, May 4.

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