

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF IOWA

THE VOTER

BOARD 2018-19

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LEAGUE COLLABORATES ON WATER QUALITY

On December 3, an educational workshop was held in Coralville by the Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization (UMRR ILO). Speakers included Chris Henning, from the Women, Food and Agriculture Network, Mike Delaney, from the Izaak Walton League, and Lonnie McCauley, the UMRR ILO Action Chairperson. These organizations are reaching out to absentee farmland landowners - people who rent farmland to others who farm. The Izaak Walton League has received a grant to develop workshops to provide landowners with information on how to protect rented farm land. UMRR-ILO is working with the Izaak Walton League chapters in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois to set up workshops in watersheds that impact the Mississippi River basin. The Coralville meeting in Iowa provided an opportunity to meet each other and set up the groundwork for local workshop planning. This may be a great opportunity for your local League to impact Iowa's water quality!

LWVIA CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

Jan 26, 10 am, Board Meeting, Cedar Rapids

Feb 15, 9 am, Criminal & Juv Justice Comm Mtg - ZOOM Conference Call

Feb 20, 9:30 am - 2:00 pm, Capitol Day, Des Moines

March 16, 10 am, LWVIA Board Meeting, Iowa City

May 18, 10 am, LWVIA Board Meeting, Iowa City

June 8, 9 am, LWVIA Convention, Ames

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

from **Mary Rae Bragg, LWVIA President**



Ready or not, here she comes! 2019 has made her entrance, bringing with her the usual New Year load of promise and problems. With Iowa's Legislature back in session, we can only hope that the promise isn't platitude, but real potential that becomes positive change in the case of a number of League priorities.

Let's take a moment to celebrate the most significant change our Iowa legislature has witnessed since Jackson County Rep. Carolyn Campbell Pendray took the oath of office in 1929. Ninety years after Pendray became the first woman elected to Iowa's General Assembly, female representation in that body finally reached its all-time high, with 34 women in the House and 11 in the Senate, or 30 percent of members. The previous record was 23 percent, or a total of just 35 female lawmakers. OK, 45 women in the Iowa Legislature -- home to 150 senators and representatives -- is admittedly a long way from gender equity, but women are moving the bar and Iowa voters are helping them do it. So congratulations to those women who have put in all the hard work that running for office entails. If they didn't win in November, you be the one to encourage them to try again and find more women to join them in the 2020 race.

And don't let anyone tell you gender doesn't matter. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that issues inherently important to women are going to be given more attention when their voices are being heard in the assembly. Or, as my favorite T-shirt says, "If you aren't at the table, you're on the menu!" In case you missed it, Iowa is now in the position of also having elected a female governor and women to serve in half the state's congressional seats. But that won't mean much if they aren't conscience of being a voice for women who have been underrepresented for far too long. Resolve in 2019 to remind them!

One great way to encourage women who have been elected is to give them your personal best on Tuesday, February 20. That is League's annual Capitol Day in Des Moines, when League members from around the state gather under the golden dome to get legislative updates and then head up stairs to let lawmakers know the League is in the House... and the Senate!

Throughout the Legislative session, League lobbyist Amy Campbell will be providing information to us via email about issues of importance to us and, of course, she will be one of the presenters at LWVIA's state convention June 8 in Ames. Convention will also be the time for you to see the exciting things in store for our 2020 100th anniversary commemoration. Your League of Women Voters is coordinating an anniversary year with multiple state wide organizations and institutions that will be like nothing ever attempted in this state, with our June convention the time and place to see what's coming. Mark your calendar now!

Our biennial convention is the perfect opportunity for your newer members to get excited about this organization and your long-time members to get reinvigorated. Make sure your elected officials who are members of League get a special invitation to attend with you. (And if they aren't members yet, get busy and recruit them!) Sometimes we take for granted that lawmakers understand League issues, but first-hand exposure to our speakers and our numbers at convention can help ensure they are informed. This legislative season looks to be a busy one for League, with felon voting, judicial selection and mental health funding among our priorities that were being talked about even before the session began. And while we'll be getting information to you about state activities, be sure to look closely at your local League agenda. How are you doing at addressing new members' interests? Are you communicating with them? Do you even have new members? What community issues could your local League be educating the public about?

It's not too late in the year for a resolution that will make you a more active participant in your local League. 2019 could be the year you stretch your identity and your member numbers. After all, the year is new and the possibilities are everywhere!

*Yours in League,
Mary Rae*



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF IOWA

2019-2020 State Public Policy Priorities

TOP PRIORITIES

- ★ **Automatic reinstatement of voting rights for people with felony convictions upon release from incarceration.** Iowa and Kentucky are the only two states that permanently ban all individuals with a felony conviction from voting unless they are restored by the Governor. The Legislature needs to take immediate action to begin the process for a constitutional amendment that can be presented to the voters in 2022.
- ★ **Protect Iowa's judicial nominating process and redistricting process,** both of which are national models. Partisan politics has no place in either process, and Iowa's current system ensures that there is a balanced, fair, and non-partisan approach to selecting judges and redrawing our political landscape.
- ★ **Increase the state sales tax to create a stable, sufficient, and dedicated funding source for water quality.** The Legislature needs to ensure REAP is fully funded at no less than \$20 million.
- ★ **Address the income cliff for child care assistance.** Working families should not be forced to choose between affordable child care and job advancements that would make them ineligible for child care assistance. Tiering the assistance in a way that allows parents to move up their career ladder without an immediate loss in child care creates a path to independence that the state should support.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

- ★ Build on Iowa's successful **bottle redemption law** by adding other non-carbonated beverages and increasing handling fees that go to redemption centers.
- ★ Ensure reliable and sufficient funding for the state's regional **MH/DS system**, including funding for the new core services for those with complex needs.
- ★ Begin to develop an integrated, coordinated, and comprehensive **children's mental health system**.
- ★ Encourage strong and consistent **oversight of Medicaid** to ensure services are comprehensive and accessible without unnecessary administrative burdens.
- ★ Guarantee sufficient funding for all levels of **education**, including child care, preschool, K-12 education, community colleges, and Regents institutions.
- ★ Provide greater judicial flexibility in sentencing by eliminating **mandatory minimum sentencing** and penalty enhancements that do not contribute to public safety.
- ★ Resist all efforts to further limit access to women's **reproductive health services** or reinstate the **death penalty**.
- ★ Vote down a proposed **gun rights** constitutional amendment that goes beyond federal constitutional protections, and instead align with the US Constitution.

Click to follow our lobbyists on bills this session where we have an interest: [BILL TRACKER](#). Then under "select client" scroll down to League of Women Voters to get info on many bills.

WORK ON RESTORATION OF VOTING RIGHTS FOR IOWANS WITH FELONY CONVICTIONS

by Myrna Loehrlein, LWVIA Criminal & Juvenile Justice Committee Chair

On December 13, Karen Person, and Myrna Loehrlein from the League's Criminal & Juvenile Justice Committee met with the Governor's Senior Legal Counsel, Sam Langholz, and Deputy Counsel, Michael Boal. Also present were the LWVIA lobbyists Amy Campbell and Craig Patterson who had arranged the meeting to discuss automatic restoration of voting rights to persons who have been convicted of a felony and have served the terms of their incarceration.

The Iowa Constitution permanently disenfranchises persons who have been convicted of an "infamous crime." Iowa defines "infamous crime" as any felony. This means that Iowa is one of only two states that permanently disenfranchise persons convicted of a crime. Kentucky is the other state.

This is an outdated understanding of voting rights and one that it is clearly time to change. Florida and Kentucky have been the only other states with permanent disenfranchisement. However, Florida voters changed their constitution in the recent midterm elections to allow automatic restoration to vote for people with prior felony convictions except those convicted of murder or a felony sexual offense, upon completion of their sentences. It is time for Iowa to do the same.

While the Governor can restore voting rights with an executive order, and Gov. Vilsack and others have done just that, Mr. Langholz told us that it is unlikely that Gov. Reynolds will do that. He indicated that Gov. Reynolds was expressing respect for the constitution. She can and does also restore rights to felons who individually apply to her for restoration. However, this process has been intimidating, expensive, cumbersome, and slow. Out of 52,000 currently disenfranchised felons, 88 persons have had their rights restored by Gov. Reynolds.

It is also possible that the legislature could pass a law defining "infamous crime" in a way that would no longer disenfranchise all felons, but in that case, the legislation would have to be acceptable to the Iowa Supreme Court. Recent decisions have shown the

court to be fairly unsympathetic to making the change through the judiciary.

The appropriate and lasting approach to this problem is a constitutional amendment. Amending the Iowa constitution would require two votes in the legislature and one from Iowa citizens and take at least until 2022. The League has already started the research necessary to pursue this change. Meanwhile, we emphasized to Mr. Langholz and Mr. Boal that individual applications for restoration of rights are difficult, expensive, and intimidating. We expressed our wish to assist applicants, but that we require training to be sure we do this competently and asked for their help in acquiring this training.

The response of the Counsels is that the Governor's office is still considering options, but we were invited to keep in touch. You can be sure that the League will do just that.



Left to right: Michael Boal, Myrna Loehrlein, Karen Person, & Sam Langholz met in the Iowa Capitol on December 13 to discuss automatic restoration of voting rights for individuals who have committed felonies.

[In the 1/16/2019 State of the State Address Governor Reynolds stated that she did not "believe that clemency should be in the hands of a single person." She went on to support an amendment to Iowa's Constitution. She also stated, "I believe Iowans recognize the power of redemption."]

Contact Joanne Smith, mariesm@msn.com, if you would like to have your name added to the email list for the LWVIA Criminal & Juvenile Justice Committee.

LWVIA CRIMINAL & JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE 2019 Legislative Priorities

Automatically enfranchise people with felony convictions upon release from incarceration

Iowa is one of only 2 states along with Kentucky that permanently ban all individuals with a felony conviction from voting unless the Governor restores the right to vote. Thousands of Iowans who have completed the terms of their parole remain unable to vote, though they are living and working in Iowa communities. African Americans are disproportionately impacted by this ban.

Iowa's Governor may restore the right to vote on an individual basis. Additionally, the Governor may restore voting rights through an executive order as was done in 2005 making individuals with felony convictions automatically eligible to register to vote after completing parole or probation. However, this executive order can also be reversed as was done in 2011. This has led to confusion as to who is eligible to vote as those released from parole before the rescinding of the executive order are still eligible to vote. Currently by law, individuals with felony convictions who desire to register to vote must submit an application to the Governor for "Restoration of Citizenship Rights." This can be done after completion of their sentence, any required probation, parole, or supervised release, and after all court costs, restitution and fines have been paid or if there is a payment plan which is current in payments.

The number of felons in Iowa unable to vote due to felony convictions since 2011 is more than 52,000; nearly 6% of Iowans can be expected to face lifetime disenfranchisement due to a felony conviction. Many felony convictions have no impact on the suitability to vote. Felony charges include non-violent drug offenses and a number of non-violent thefts. This is because the Iowa Constitution says the following about qualifications for voters: "Disqualified persons. SEC. 5. A person adjudged mentally incompetent to vote or a person convicted of any infamous crime shall not be entitled to the privilege of an elector. Repealed and rewritten 2008, Amendment [47]"

The December 1, 2017, Iowa Public Safety Advisory Board's Annual Report to the General Assembly said the following: "PSAB supports the efforts of the Iowa Legislature to examine voting right restoration for some offenders. The PSAB suggests the Legislature consider which felonies should or should not be eligible for voting right restoration."

Provide greater judicial flexibility in sentencing by eliminating mandatory minimum sentencing and penalty enhancements that do not contribute to public safety

Penalty enhancements should be in code only when research shows their efficacy in reducing recidivism. Iowa is the only state in the Midwest that has established mandatory minimum sentences for robbery related offenses. A step toward reducing this inflexibility was made in 2016 with the passage of HF 2064 which reduces the time served before consideration for parole.

Maintain the current Class A Felony sentence (Code 902.1) of life without the possibility of parole without capital punishment enhancements

The LWVIA opposes capital punishment and its reinstatement in Iowa. Research from the Death Penalty Information Center shows that the death penalty is not a deterrent to crime, nor does it advance public safety. In fact, there is an inverse relationship between murder rates and enactment of the death penalty. Capitol punishment is also costly, as shown in various studies.

Secure equal treatment under the law for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender

As steps toward this goal, LWVIA proposes the following:

Equalize Crack/Powder Cocaine Sentencing: Both forms of cocaine have the same effect on the brain. Their use differs between black and whites. Punishment should not discriminate between the races.

Ban the Box: Prohibit questions about prior criminal convictions on employment applications.

Racial Profiling: Require collection of records on traffic stops to review for racial profiling.

Reinvest savings from reduced incarceration of non-violent drug offenders into community based corrections

Recent legislation means that nearly 1,000 offenders may receive early release, meaning greater burdens on community based corrections. Money saved from reduced incarceration should be invested in more parole officer positions and community based treatment programs for mental health and addiction; vocational programs; and programs directed toward successful community re-entry.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS & WHY WE DO STUDIES

by Karen Person, League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Des Moines

Studies take a lot of time and are a lot of work for League members, so why do we bother? Because if we as a League want to take action - such as to advocate for or against a particular legislative bill or fight against a city ordinance - Leagues at local, state, or national levels can only do so when they have a “**program**” that allows for that advocacy. **Program** is defined as “selected governmental issues that the League has chosen for concerted study and action at the national, state or local level.” *Program* is not the same thing as “*programs*” which are League meetings where there may be speakers, discussions or other activities.

The **program process** is specified in the bylaws and includes the following steps:

- Formal adoption (by members at an annual meeting or by state/national convention delegates) of an issue for study.
- Member study and agreement on broad concepts.
- Formulation of a position by the appropriate board of directors.
- Action as directed by the board of directors.
- Annual or biennial re-adoption of the position.

Traditionally, the **Study Program Criteria** form is sent to local League in the months prior to convention and asks them to address such questions as:

- Does it fall within League Principles? access [HERE](#)
- Does the League already have positions that can be applied to the proposal? access [HERE](#)
- Is legislative/government action needed?
- How much member interest has been expressed for the issue? Will this attract new members?
- Is this the crucial time for the issue?
- Do the political realities permit effective action?
- Is this the appropriate level of the League to address the issue? (state level rather than local or national)
- Will the League be able to draw on allies? Will it help raise funds?

The form often asks if there is someone willing to chair the study, and when the local League Board approved the study proposal. The **deadline** this year to send the form to the LWVIA board is **on or before March 16**. The LWVIA Board must then decide on which proposals are “recommended” to be studies as part of the program process, and which will be “not-recommended” by **May 11**. Both recommended and not-recommended studies are discussed and voted on at Convention. Because we only have convention every two years and it is only at convention that a new study can be initiated, it is not often that this opportunity presents itself.

Studies and Program Adoption: League program arises from the suggestions of members. State program is voted on by members at the state convention. This year, our convention will be June 8 in Ames. If a proposed study gets approved at convention, a committee process is used to write the study. They then involve local Leagues with positions determined either by **consensus** (where agreement is reached using League’s responses to specific questions) or by **concurrence** (where agreement or a vote on a pre-stated position is required). It is through the consensus or concurrence process that members around the state become educated on the issue being studied. It is important to the committee putting together the consensus questions or concurrence position work closely with the LWVIA board as they will have decisive responsibility in weighing member input, finalizing the position and publicizing the position with members, media, and the public.

Good news! Studies often energize members around an issue. In fact, the Corrections study committee initiated 15 years ago, still meets as the renamed, “Criminal & Juvenile Justice Committee,” due to the enthusiasm generated by the study. Teresa Bomhoff, a mental health advocate from Des Moines, joined League because she was so impressed with the League’s 2009 Iowa Mental Health study chaired by Nancy Brown. Teresa stated, “The study was the first time I remembered a non-mental health organization taking an in-depth look at the subject of mental health in our state. League really took the bull by the horns and presented an accurate report with much needed recommendations. And League of Women Voters is held in high esteem so that our advocacy does matter!” Today, Teresa serves on the Metro Des Moines LWV board.

2019 LWVIA CONVENTION HOSTED BY AMES & STORY COUNTY LWV

by Nancy Halvorson & Becky Coats, Co-Presidents of Ames and Story County League of Women Voters

LWV of Ames and Story County is delighted to invite you to Ames on Friday, June 7, and Saturday, June 8, for the 2019 LWVIA convention. The convention is being held at the Iowa State University Alumni Center. This very modern and attractive venue offers ADA accommodations as well as an ample free parking lot at the door. If you'd like a peek, go to www.isualumnicenter.org

Registration will be open on site 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. on Friday, June 7, and from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 8. Pre-registration will be available online March 1st.

A Friday evening event at 7:00 p.m. will be an informal presentation on 'Human Trafficking' with Dr. George Belitsos, Chair of the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery. Dr. George is also founder of Youth and Shelter Services.

Saturday Keynote Speakers: A Conversation with Andie Dominick and Carol Hunter

Both Andie and Carol are with the Des Moines Register. Andie is a Pulitzer Prize Winner for Investigative Journalism for her series that examined the damaging consequences for poor Iowa residents of privatizing the state's administration of Medicaid. Dominick did this series in a clear, indignant voice, free of cliché or sentimentality. Carol Hunter was promoted to Executive Editor of the Des Moines Register in November 2016. Rather than a speech, Andie and Carol wish to have a conversation with the convention attendees. They will each give background and biographical information and then open it up to audience for questions and comments. We are very excited to "score" these two amazing, dedicated women.



The ISU Alumni Center, located at 429 Alumni Lane in the Iowa State Center complex at Iowa State University, Ames, was build in 2008.

Silent Auction: We will be having a silent auction and already have some lovely donations. Please consider bring an item or more than one. All proceeds help the LWVIA budget.

Hotel: The Radisson Hotel, Ames Conference Center at ISU, 2609 University Blvd, is hosting our members who need overnight lodging. We have a block of rooms at a rate of \$109.00 with a deadline of May 15th for the special rate. The Radisson is less than a mile from the Alumni Center. Breakfast is not included but we are hosting an ample Continental Breakfast at the Alumni Center beginning at 7:45 a.m. Additionally there is a small café on hotel property and others nearby. There will also be a listing of local restaurants in your welcome bag.

Reservations can be made now by:

- 1) Calling the hotel direct at #515-268-8808 and requesting the League of Women Voters block rate, or
- 2) Calling Radisson Reservation line at: #800-333-3333 and requesting League of Women Voters block rate, or
- 3) Go online by clicking this link [HERE](#). Guests will need to enter their stay dates and the rate of \$109 will appear.

Any questions or concerns please contact us at: prez2.lwv@gmail.com or by phone: Nancy #515-231-3746

We think this is going to be an amazing convention, listening, learning and having some fun along the way. We are excited to see you in Ames!
Nancy Halvorson and Becky Coats,
Co-Presidents Ames and Story County LWV

PMP COUNT DUE JANUARY 31

Per-Member Payment (PMP) is the way Local Leagues satisfy the requirement to support the state and national level of our three-level organization. Presidents and local League Roster Managers, your local League roster needs to be updated by January 31 on the LWVUS database. This is the date used annually for determination of the billing of local Leagues based on membership counts. PMP rates are used to determine the number of delegates to State Conventions. Life Members or 50-year-memberships have full voting rights but are excused from payment of dues. Therefore, no LWVUS or LWVIA PMP is charged for those members. Failure to get your roster updated by January 31 may result in inaccurate PMP billing to your local League!

LWVIA CAPITOL DAY ON FEBRUARY 20

Capitol Day 2019 will be on Wednesday, Feb. 20, at the Iowa Capitol in Des Moines. It is an opportunity to gather under the golden dome and learn about legislative procedures as we meet and greet Iowa legislators! This is your opportunity to advocate for League issues. Please contact Mary Rae Bragg, bragg.maryrae388@gmail.com, if you have questions.

WANTING TO KEEP UP ON LEAGUE?

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