THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF IOWA

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LWVIA Amicus in Griffin v. Pate Case

League members from around Iowa attended the Griffin v. Pate case at the Iowa Supreme Court building. LWVIA had filed an amicus brief, with assistance from LWVUS and the Brennan Center for Justice, in support of Kelli Jo Griffin. Rita Bettis with the ACLU of Iowa presented the case which may impact thousands of Iowans beyond Ms. Griffin who have been disenfranchised. The case, in a nutshell, states that Kelli Jo Griffin should never have been denied the right to vote because her crime was not "infamous" and thus disenfranchisement was invalid under the Iowa Constitution. After the hearing, League members attending took this photo with Rita Bettis and Kelli Jo Griffin. Pictured left to right: Bonnie Pitz (Belle Plaine & LWVIA co-president), Jo Ann Finkenbinder (Cedar Falls), Rita Bettis (Des Moines), Kelli Jo Griffin (plaintiff, Montrose), Karen Person (Des Moines), Linda Murken (Gilbert), and Jean Basinger (Des Moines). For more info, Click on and read the Des Moines Register for the complete article.

LWVIA Calendar of Coming Events:

April 23, 10 am, LWVIA Board Meeting, Grinnell, IA
June 7, Iowa Primary Election Day
Junei1, 9 am, LWVIA Council, Marshalltown,, IA
June 16 - 19, LWVUS Convention, Washington, D.C.
August 20, 9:30 am LWVIA Leadership Training

Contact Bonnie if needing details: #(641) 275-1712

President's Message

from Bonnie Pitz, LWVIA President

Greetings to our League members across the state:

I am very anxious for spring to arrive. I want to see the trees budded out, daffodils and tulips in bloom, really green grass and a warm breeze blowing my way. I want to open the windows and enjoy the fresh air all day long, and night too.

What else is coming our way very soon? What else do we have to look forward to doing? We have so much headed our way in League. On June 11, 2016, we will have Council in Marshalltown. Topics will be our business meeting but also a program on Human Trafficking. During the following weekend in June, we have the LWVUS National Convention in Washington, D.C. If you love League and want to have an experience that you will never forget, go to National convention. Many Leagues have funds set aside to help with expenses and part of the cost can be from Education funds. The State Board will be sending out information in late April in regard to Scholarships to help with the cost for attending for this year's convention as adopted in the budget and approved during the 2015 LWVIA Convention. Registration materials are included in this issue of the ***Voter*** for LWVIA State Council and LWVUS National Convention.

Another exciting effort from League is VOTE411.org. Linda Murken and Terese Grant are communicating with local league presidents to get this resource in line for each local and the state. The state LWVIA will be covering the cost of the federal senatorial race and federal senatorial primaries. Local leagues will focus on their congressional races and the state's senatorial races for some areas, and the state's representative races. Local leagues will also focus on local level races such as county sheriff, county auditor, and county supervisors. Some local leagues will be doing primary races - how exciting!

On March 30, 2016, the Iowa Supreme Court will be hearing the Griffin v. Pate case in the Supreme Court building. The ACLU of Iowa filed this case to restore the voting rights to Kelli Jo Griffin of Montrose. The Iowa League filed an amicus brief in support of the ACLU case. The League has worked hard to make progress on felon voter enfranchisement. The League of Women Voters of the US believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. (Statement of Position on Citizen's Right to Vote, National Board, March 1982)

So much that League members can look forward to happening! In League, Bonnie

Excerpt from an email sent to Bonnie & Deb inviting League members to hear Griffin v. Pate:

I want to personally invite you and other Leaguers to attend the oral arguments next Wednesday, March 30 at 9 am in our voting rights lawsuit challenging disenfranchisement for felony convictions, Griffin v. Pate, at the Supreme Court.

I cannot overstate how important and wonderful it has been to have the support of the League and the Brennan Center in filing what was just a truly phenomenal brief in the case, as well as to the Brennan Center's continued support in helping us conduct multiple moot arguments in the case to get ready for the big day.

It would mean a lot to us to have your support in the courtroom next week! . . .

Thanks to you all for everything you do,
Rita (Rita Bettis, Legal Director for ACLU of Iowa)

Convention Information:

LWVIA Co-President **Dr. Deborah Ann Turner** is on the Slate of Candidates for LWVUS Board!

Click here to Register for Lobby Day and Convention

Click here to reserve your hotel room at Washington Marriott Wardman Park and get Convention rate

Click here to purchase Capitol Steps performance ticket(s) for Friday, June 17, 7:30 pm

Agenda:

Thursday, June 16: Pre-Convention Lobby Day (additional $80 fee)

9 - 10:30 am: Lobby Day check-in and legislative briefing,

10:45 am - 4 pm: Lobby Day registrants travel to Capitol Hill for pre-arranged meetings with their Congressional representatives

3:30 - 5 pm: Lobby Day registrants return to hotel for debrief

Thursday, June 16: Pre-Convention

Noon - 7 pm: Registration, Wares Market, Engagement Zone, Info Desk, Dinner on your own/with colleagues

7 - 10:30 pm: Orientation to convention for NEW attendees, parliamentary briefings, caucuses and information sessions, networking

Friday, June 17, Convention

7:30 am: Registration, Wares Market Caucuses and Info Sessions
8:30 - 11:45 am: Plenary Session – Keynote speakers
11:45 - 1:00: Lunch on your own/Optional Roundtable Discussions
1 - 5:30 pm: Plenary Session
5:30 - 7 pm: Dinner on your own/with colleagues
7:30 - 8:30 pm: Capitol Steps Performance
8:45 - 10:30 pm: Caucuses, Info Sessions, Q&As

Saturday, June 18, Convention

7:30 am: Registration, Wares Market Caucuses and Info Sessions
8:30 - Noon: Plenary Session
Noon - 1:30: Lunch on your own/Optional Roundtable Discussions
1:30 - 5:30: Speakers, workshops and training breakouts
6:30 - 7:30: Pre-Banquet Reception
7:30 - 9:30: Banquet & Speaker (included in registration fee)

Sunday, June 19, Convention

7:30 am: Wares Market, Info Sessions
8:30 - Noon: Plenary Session
Convention adjourns at noon.

LWVIA Council 2016

June 11, 2016, Marshalltown, Iowa
Marshalltown Community College Campus, Rooms 612 & 614

Agenda:

9:30 Registration, Coffee and Networking
10:00 Welcome by Dr. Deborah Turner and Bonnie Pitz Co-Presidents LWVIA
Presentations
Amy and Craig--Report on 2016 Legislative Session
Video *Breaking Traffic*
Human Trafficking in the Midwest--speaker TBD
Lunch
Voter Registration Dilemmas--Myrna Loehrlein
Business Meeting
2:00 Wrap Up

Final Agenda and Reports sent out in early May

Two delegates from each League are invited to attend. Additional League members are always welcome. Cost is $15 which includes lunch and materials.

Register with Bonnie: dbpitz@iowatelecom.net Registration Deadline --Wednesday June 8

What is UMRR? Upper Mississippi River Region InterLeague Organization

UMRR (pronounced 'Ummer') is the newly formed InterLeague Organization that consists of Leagues in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa working on water quality along watersheds that feed the upper Mississippi River. Currently the following Leagues belong:

- 10 local Iowa LWVs
- 22 local Illinois LWVs
- 17 local Minnesota LWVs
- 5 local Wisconsin LWVs

According to Gretchen Sabel, UMRR ILO president from Minnesota, "Our work here at the Ummer is swinging into gear. We have submitted our application to the LWVUS for formal recognition as an ILO. The application is on the LWVUS Board agenda in April. We learned just this week that we have been approved by the IRS as a 501c3 not for profit corporation. Thanks to Ellen Rosborough for her diligent work on getting this done."

Communications director Bonnie Cox states, "We continue to recruit local LWVs to join our ILO. Please encourage your local or neighboring LWVs to join our ILO. It's easy. Just call Bonnie Cox, 815 777-9282 to receive an LWV-UMRR ILO membership application form. Submit the form with your LWV's yearly $25.00 per league payment to join."

TIF (Tax Increment Financing) Study Update:

from Lauris Olson, LWVIA TIF Study Member

The state league study committee looking at city and county use of tax incremental financing (TIF) to fund urban renewal and new economic development projects throughout the state is making good progress.

They have sifted through dozens of background materials, identified a number of experts on TIFs specifically, as well as others whose knowledge expands into publicly funded economic development in general, and they have selected a half dozen counties and cities using TIF for further research.

As a result, the links for three more background and reference materials have been added to the several already posted on the LWVIA.org website. (Click on the study link on the home page.) Committee members will begin in April to interview six of the identified experts and representatives of the six cities and counties selected, with plans to have all interviews completed and documented by July.

In July, the committee plans to ask local Leagues to become involved in the collection of data. The committee will send a list of questions centered on TIF usages in their immediate areas (or a nearby area if the local League's area is already being studied). Well aware of the competition for members' time during the summer months, the committee hopes to frame the questions in such a manner that one or two members per local league will be able to get the answers with only a few hours work. Answers from the local Leagues will be due in September.

The committee doubts any local League will need to look far to find a nearby TIF district.

The Iowa Legislative Service Agency's August 2014 update shows that only four counties do not have any TIF districts within their boundaries. Of the remaining 95 counties, the percentages of land valuations currently included in a TIF district range from 1 to 43 percent.

Of the 338 public school districts in Iowa, 262 had TIF increment valuations within the school boundaries. And there are 3,871 wind turbines in Iowa as of the date of the legislative report, with the revenue from the increase in most of the turbines' valuations being deflected into county TIF districts.

The diverse experience of the study committee's home areas mirrors the picture painted by the LSA study.

Barbara Beaumont, the committee chairwoman, and member Linda Schreiber are from the Johnson County league, where one of the most publicized controversies in the usage of TIF occurred around the Coral Ridge Mall.

Member Kathy Kahoun, Des Moines Metro LWV president, used TIF for years in her role as Neighborhood Development Division head in the Community Development Department for the City of Des Moines. Des Moines uses TIF to finance both downtown and city urban renewal projects and those originating in new areas, commonly called "green field" projects.

Lauris Olson is from Story County, where the city of Huxley has used TIF financing to build new public facilities and upgrade infrastructure, as well as develop a new housing area. Story County also uses the incremental tax income from more than 140 wind turbines to finance infrastructure projects related to economic development in the communities and areas outside of Ames.

Looking ahead, the committee plans to work on the draft of the TIF study in September and October, with submission to the Iowa League board in November. A final version should be ready for the local Leagues by February, with plenty of time for the Leagues to consider it before 2017 state convention.

Local League Boards: As you plan for 2016-17, consider an educational program on TIF

Capitol Day 2016

by Bonnie Pitz, LWVIA Co-Chair

We had a Capitol experience this year for Lobby Day activities in Des Moines. About 30 League members attended the morning meeting in the Legislative Dining Room. Our primary topics this year included Water Quality, Human Trafficking and Oversight for Medicaid transition. LWVIA Lobbyists Amy Campbell and Craig Patterson gave us an update on this year's progress and introduced the main speakers, Governor Terry Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds. The Governor gave an explanation of, "SAVE for the Future", his plan for supporting education infrastructure and water quality efforts. Those attending had some excellent questions to gain greater insight to this plan. Although the League is enthused about the Governor working to provide funding for Water Quality, we have some reservations about this plan. League members were also given numbers in regard to how the SAVE plan would affect the money coming into their own school districts in future years. Members were also invited to attend a Senate Judiciary Hearing - discussion of a gun bill and parental rights of an offender for a child born from rape were some of the topics of discussion.

After the morning presentations, Deb Turner and I manned a table in the rotunda to distribute materials about League, our 2016 Legislative Priorities, a copy of our last ***Voter*** and membership items. It was fun to discuss League with those passing by. We also distributed Chocolate Gold Nuggets with the phrase "Clean Water is like Gold."

League members returned a form to Amy and Craig outlining who they contacted and the level of support among our Representatives and Senators in relation to the priority items of the day.

THE BAKKEN PIPELINE FIGHT IS NOT OVER!

from Linda Murken, LWVIA Board Member

You have probably heard that, on March 10, 2916, the Iowa Utilities Board granted a permit to Dakota Access to construct a crude oil pipeline across the state of Iowa. Well, that is true, but not exactly. In its order, the IUB stated several conditions that Dakota Access still must meet in order to receive a final permit for the pipeline. Among them are requirements that Dakota Access obtain $25 million in insurance to cover any damages from pipeline leaks or spills, and resolve issues regarding several easements they are seeking. And they still need to get permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for crossing certain lands and must deal with county drainage district permissions as well. Dakota Access is not to begin construction until all of these issues are resolved.

Nevertheless, it appears that construction may have begun (in terms of tree clearing and ancillary services) in some counties. Numerous petitions and responses are being filed daily. It is also anticipated that a petition for judicial review of the IUB's decision will be filed in District Court.

The League of Women Voters of Iowa is a member of the Bakken Pipeline Resistance Coalition. **www.nobakken.com**
Stay tuned, and stay active. This is NOT over!!

Griffin v. Pate: A League Member's Perspective

from Linda Murken, LWVIA Board Member

March 30 was a landmark day at the Iowa Supreme Court, as oral arguments were heard in the case of Kelli Jo Griffin v. Terry Branstad, Matt Schultz (as then Iowa Secretary of State) and Denise Fraise (Lee Co. Auditor). ACLU of Iowa Legal Director Rita Bettis, the lead attorney on this case, did an outstanding job of outlining the issues for the Justices and fielding their questions. She was joined by attorneys Gary Dickey (on behalf of Polk County Auditor Fitzgerald) and Coty Montag, an attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

The League of Women Voters of Iowa played a major role in this case, by submitting an amicus brief,. Our friends at the Brennan Center for Justice assisted in preparing the brief in support of Griffin. Coty Montag with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund used portions of the brief in her oral arguments. League President Bonnie Pitz and League members Jean Basinger, JoAnn Finkenbinder, Linda Murken and Karen Person attended the hearing. Current Secretary of State Paul Pate and Iowa Representative Mary Wolfe were among those in attendance. And of course the plaintiff, Kelli Jo Griffin, was there. We had the pleasure of meeting after the hearing and speaking with her about her case. Kelli Jo is a very articulate and courageous woman. She graciously agreed to joining the League members in attendance in the photo on page 1 of this ***Voter*** newsletter.

Numerous points of law and logic were debated, among them:

- Differences between the 1846 and the 1857 Code of Iowa (it was odd to hear arguments about intent based on laws in effect when women couldn't vote and when people were legally enslaved)
- How the phrase "infamous crimes" in the Iowa Constitution should be interpreted
- Other states' statutes governing ex-felons' voting
- The disproportionate impact upon minorities of considering all felons to have lost their right to vote
- Whether a different definition of people ineligible to vote would be easier or more difficult to administer
- The most important question, "What does this particular crime have to do with the purity of the ballot box?"
- Research demonstrating that restoration of voting rights can strengthen the state's democracy and serve public safety

In terms of whether the issue should be settled by the Court or by the Legislature, Bettis concluded her remarks – and the oral arguments – by stating "This Court since 1868 has said the Legislature is not able to decide who can vote. "Voters may choose their representatives, but representatives are not allowed to choose their voters."

It was a great day. Let's hope the opinion will be even greater for Iowa.

LWVIA at Environmental Lobby Day:

League of Women Voters of Iowa once again had a table at the Iowa Environmental Council's **Environmental Lobby Day & REAP Day at the Capitol** on March 22, 2016. Karen Person is pictured at LWVIA's table in the Rotunda. The purpose of the day is to remind legislators that there is broad support for sustainable funding, programs and policies that conserve our natural resources and continues Iowa's clean energy leadership. We were asking legislators to fully fund REAP at $20 million, fund the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, fund critical conservation programs, and expand access to clean energy through solar and wind tax incentives.

Halt Devastating Plan to Privatize Medicaid

by Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, LWVIA Co-President

OpEd article reprinted from the *Des Moines Register*, 2/24/2016.
The article was based on a remarks by Dr. Turner for Moral Monday IOWA at the Capitol on 2/15/2016

Hubert Humphrey stated, "The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." If a state is willing to short change the well being of any of our most vulnerable, then we, as citizens, have a moral responsibility to step forward to question those actions. That time is now.

I write on behalf of League of Women Voters of Iowa, and as a 30-plus years Iowa medical provider who has grave concerns about the Medicaid privatization. The LWV has been an advocate of taking moral action on critical public issues since its inception by an Iowan, Carrie Chapman Catt, 96 years ago.

Our legislative priorities are published at lwvia.org. One of our health care priorities for 2016 is: Enact policies that guarantee access for all residents to comprehensive, uniform, and affordable health services including a full range of reproductive services.

State Senator Janet Petersen (left) listens to remarks made by Dr. Deborah Ann Turner regarding the privatization of Medicaid services. Both were the featured speakers at Moral Monday IOWA, 2/15/16, "Privatizing Medicaid: The Real Story of It's Effect on Iowa's Most Vulnerable."

Concerns of participants, providers, and all stakeholders engaged in the Medicaid system make it clear that Iowa's rush to privatize Medicaid does not fulfill the league's priority for quality healthcare. A detailed look at the plan suggests those making key decisions have not done their due diligence in protecting Medicaid's future. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services agreed by appropriately delayed the privatization of our system in December.

I am painfully aware of the difficulties that major changes in our medical landscape can create. I was working when the Iowa Health and Wellness Plan was enacted. Those changes have begun to show a benefit. Iowa has more people seeking and receiving health care and in more appropriate and cost efficient settings. It is not a perfect system. It is a work in progress, but we have a plan with providers working together for the benefit of all Iowans regardless of medical needs. Why jump ship now?

According to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, managed care in Medicaid populations saves money primarily in two ways: by decreasing days of hospitalization through increased access to primary care and by decreasing reimbursement to fee-for-service providers. Many of Iowa's fee-for-service organizations provide critical services to Medicaid recipients and are already working with restricted budgets. We are achieving successes on the first measure with our current plan, and the second measure will drive providers out of the Medicaid market, costing more over time.

The state acknowledges that many will have their current provider or case manager relationships severed. They will strive to find other providers or participants can go out of network. Many may not understand how devastating it can be for patients and families to lose that special relationship with their provider. It can impact their lives in serious ways. I know. I am a cancer physician.

On Jan. 25 one out of every four providers had not signed a single contract, and less than half had signed all three. When participants have asked if their provider team is part of their pre-assigned plan, they have been told, far too often, that they must call their providers because the state does not have up-to-date information! This is unacceptable.

Fears and concerns of Medicaid participants and their families are real and they must be taken seriously. So before saying yes to this precarious plan we should ask the following six questions, Will this plan:

- Increase the number of Iowans able to access Medicaid?
- Increase the number of Iowans insured?
- Increase Iowans' options for receiving care?
- Increase the number of providers available to participants?
- Increase the hidden cost of medical care?
- Diminish the care to Iowa's most vulnerable?

There are only two questions in which the answer is "yes" — the last two. And, unfortunately, they are the only two for which the answer should be a resounding "no!" The league urges the state and the governor's office to not only hear the concerns of its citizens but also to heed them. Take the moral high road. Halt this devastating plan to privatize Medicaid.

Voter Guide, VOTE411.org

from Terese Grant, LWVIA Board

With a very important election year ahead, the State League Board has made the decision to participate at the state level in the Voter Guide, VOTE411.org again this year. Several other local Leagues have also chosen to participate. There will be several critical primary contests in June as well as the general election in November.

The VOTE411 Voter guide not only gives voters information about the candidates, but it is also a resource to find your polling place, build your ballot with our online voters' guide. With the voters' guide voters can see the races on your ballot, compare candidates' positions side-by-side.
There are three levels for covering races in VOTE411.org, much the same as the three levels of League.

- LWVUS covers the Presidential race.
- State Leagues cover races for statewide elected officials: Governor, Lt. Governor, A.G., etc. State Leagues also cover U.S. Senate races.
- Local Leagues cover the following races: U.S. Congressional seats (because, although federal positions, they are elected in and serve districts rather than being statewide), Iowa Legislators, County and City officials and School Board races.

There is an annual fee to use VOTE411.org. Our State League pays $500; local League pricing varies from $200 to $400, depending on number of members. This fee can be paid from Ed Funds.

Linda Murken and Terese Grant will provide advice in organizing local league participation. We envision this being done primarily through an informational session at LWVIA Council on June 11. Megan Brown, the National coordinator of VOTE411, provides excellent guidance and webinars.

We encourage all Leagues to seriously consider being part of this year's Voter Guide, VOTE411.org

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Yellow Rose Recognition to Pat Harper

Congratulations to Pat Harper, LWVIA Treasurer, who is receiving the Character Counts award in the Adult Citizen Category from Cedar Valley's own ***Champions of Character - Waterloo-Cedar Falls***. These Cedar Valley Representatives consistently demonstrate good character through being their best self (moral character) and doing their best work (performance character). Pat is a retired teacher and former state representative and state senator from Waterloo who served in the legislature from 1987 to 2002. Pat is a member of Black Hawk - Bremer League of Women Voters.

LWVIA Summer Leadership Training

Save the date: Saturday, August 20

What does your League need in order to be:

Financially sustainable
Growing in membership
Dynamic in your community

Send your ideas for Leadership training to Bonnie
dbpitz@iowatelecom.net

If you have photos, events, or articles you would like for consideration in the ***LWVIA Voter,*** please send them to Karen Person, LWVKaren@yahoo.com

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