

Fall 2013



Volume 68

The Voter

Board 2013 - 14:

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A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Iowa

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LWVIA Calendar:

November 16, 10:00 am, LWVIA Board Meeting,

Marshalltown Public Library, 105 W Boone St

January 18, 10:00 am, LWVIA Board Meeting,

Waterloo, Location TBA

February 18, 9:00 am, LWVIA Lobby Day, IA Voc

Rehab Bldg, 512 E 13th Street, Des Moines

March 15, 10:00 am, LWVIA Board Meeting,

Marshalltown Public Library, 105 W Boone St

May 17, 2014, LWVIA State Council Meeting

President's Message

By Bonnie Pitz

Hello League Friends,

This week has been one exciting time for League in Iowa!! The week started with a really special recognition for Carrie Chapman Catt. Last March, Dianne Bystrom, Director of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, suggested we nominate CCC for the Principal Riverwalk, Iowa. Women of Achievement Bridge in Des Moines, Iowa. She organized the necessary letters of recommendation and this last Monday evening, the selection of the four Iowa women who have made, "outstanding contributions to society" was announced. They included Carrie Chapman Catt, Louise Rosenfield Noun, Sister Bernadine Pieper, CHM and Gertrude Elzora Durden Rush. Individuals who wrote letters and extended family members met with Principal and city leaders for a lovely evening on the Principal Riverwalk. The opening of the Riverwalk was highlighted with a ribbon cutting ceremony, champagne, and flowers over the bridge into the beautiful Des Moines river.

The Principal Riverwalk features lighted, landscaped public spaces, world-class public art and unique pedestrian bridges and pathways that connect 300 miles of Central Iowa Trails. The Riverwalk began as way to give back to the city of Des Moines in honor of the 125th Anniversary of the Principal Financial Group.

A focal point of The Principal Riverwalk, the Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge spans the Des Moines River, linking the east and west sides of the city at the northern edge of the Riverwalk loop. The Bridge displays the names of Iowa women of history who have made outstanding contributions to society. Honorees are nominated by citizens and selected for recognition by a panel of judges. (from program for the evening)

The next time you visit our Capitol City, be sure to visit this bridge, stop at the new Hub Café on Court Avenue and Water Street and take in the sight of our beautiful Capitol to the east, Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge to the north, the Des Moines River and the Pedestrian Bridge to the South. The city never looked more beautiful.

That experience was Monday evening, October 7, 2013, and on Tuesday I was on the west steps of the Capitol with the 'No Megaphones for Millionaires' rally to speak out against McCutcheon vs. FEC case. This is the Supreme Court case that is trying to dismantle restrictions for money in politics for rich individuals. League joined with Iowa PIRG, Move to Amend, Sierra Club and Citizens for Community Improvement to share our frustration over this case. Wednesday I was on a phone conference call with our

LWVUS President, Elisabeth McNamera and State League Presidents and shared what we have been doing in Iowa with Voter Registration forms and the McCutcheon case. Thursday, Iowa was mentioned in the LWVUS Leader's Update.

On Saturday I was part of the LWVIA Leadership/Officer Training held in Marshalltown at Marshalltown Community College. The attendees were updated on the needed improvements of the Voter Registration form and practical ideas for doing Voter Registration in your communities. Carolyn Klaus, from Ames explained the process and there was excellent discussion of all the particular parts of the form. League will be joining with ACLU to meet with Iowa Voter Registration Commission to drop question 3 from the current form. Only this commission can allow changes to be made to Voter Registration.

Board member Mary Rae Bragg gave an update on Payday Lending activities in the city of Dubuque. This longtime league issue always makes for interesting discussions and later in the day, the Fire-EMS study was reviewed. Mary Rae is working with Mike Coveyou on this study and this can still use a few more people to make sure that all parts of the state of Iowa are represented in the work they do. Check the lwvia.org website to communicate with Mike and Mary Rae.

LWVIA Treasurer, Pat Harper reviewed duties for Local League treasurers. We also discussed notebooks, handbooks and the materials that local leagues use for membership. Tina Pace, Membership, Leadership & Development also presented useful materials on mentoring to those attending. Karen Person, Co-Chair of the Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee gave an overview on the history of this League committee and the recommendations they have advocacy work during the 2014 Legislative Session.

Leagues all over the state of Iowa are really busy handling Candidate Forums for their local City elections. It is really a great time to be part of League. Be sure to give membership materials to all those visitors to your Forums and ask the most interested to attend a meeting or to join in on the fun of League. You are always welcome to join our State Board meetings, the next one is November 16, 2013 at the Marshalltown Community Library. We start at 10:00 and will finish by 2:00 or 3:00.

In League, Bonnie Pitz



How Iowa's Nutrient Strategy Can Provide Clean Water for All

Handout reprinted from the Environmental Law & Policy Center

Clean water in Iowa's streams, rivers and lakes is a win-win for Iowans. It means nutrients and soil stay on the land, saving farmers' money and enabling them to keep growing food to feed the world now and in the future. It helps the environment by keeping excess soil and pollution out of our water. And it helps preserve Iowa's ability to enjoy the outdoors, be it fishing, boating, hunting or kayaking in our clean and safe waterways.

Background. Nutrient pollution comes from both point- and non-point-sources. Point-sources include waste water treatment plants and other industrial facilities, but in Iowa the main focus is on non-point-sources - farms.

Nutrients applied to the soil as fertilizer include nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium - either commercial grade or in organic manure. When it rains, sediment and nutrients can reach nearby waterways by leaching out, running off the surface or traveling through drainage tiles.

Farmers lose a valuable resource when soil and nutrients leave the landscape, and those nutrients become harmful to swimmers, drinking water sources, small businesses dependent on water-related recreation and property values.

Defining the Problem. Nutrient pollution is first and foremost an Iowa problem with Iowa consequences:

- **Public Health** - Nutrient pollution leads to toxic blue-green algae and cyanobacteria in lakes that can harm swimmers; nitrates and disinfection byproducts in drinking water can harm everyone.
- **Economic Health** - Polluted waterways cause property values to drop; small businesses that rely on boating, fishing and open beaches to suffer; and water treatment costs to skyrocket.
- **Environmental Health** - Nutrient pollution leads to fish kills, declining fish and waterfowl populations and deteriorating aquatic health.

The U.S. EPA asked all states to outline a proposal for dealing with nutrient pollution. As a result, the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy was prepared by the state in collaboration with Iowa State University over the last two years. The proposal is a framework for both assessing and designing strategies to reduce levels of nutrient pollution in Iowa's waterways.

Accountability & Transparency. The Nutrient Strategy relies too heavily on education and a purely voluntary approach to agricultural nutrient pollution with no transparency, time table, accountability or funding.

www.ELPC.org

This approach will not change the serious nutrient pollution problem facing Iowans. An effective strategy must include:

- Benchmarks to monitor
- Deadlines to meet
- Administrators to hold accountable
- Adequate funding to support the strategy

Filling in the Gaps: Farm Stewardship Plans

There is no "one size fits all" approach to solving Iowa's nutrient pollution problems. To make meaningful progress on agricultural nutrient pollution, each ag operation must create a tailored Farm Stewardship Plan including baseline goals focusing on practices proven to conserve soil, improve soil health and maintain fertility, keep nutrients where they are needed, and reduce nutrient pollution runoff. These baseline practices are already being implemented by responsible farmers throughout Iowa.

Farm Stewardship Plans should:

- Identify stewardship practices that could be implemented effectively to: (a) conserve soil and minimize soil movement, (b) improve soil health and fertility, (c) keep nutrients where needed, and (d) reduce nutrient pollution.
- Include a baseline or minimum set of best practices tailored to individual agricultural operations that could include these proven techniques: (a) buffers, (b) grassed waterways, (c) conservation tillage, (d) livestock exclusions, and (e) timely applications of manure.
- Use the science assessment and other research to identify additional practices - including but not limited to (a) bioreactors, (b) wetlands, and (c) cover crops - to reduce nutrient runoff sufficient to help meet watershed goals or numeric criteria.
- Include systemic accountability, such as in the form of technical assistance from the Nutrient Strategy's proposed "certified crop advisers," who could help design and certify the plan.
- Implement first on farms located in priority watersheds.

In many instances, a Farm Stewardship Plan would not be much different than the process responsible farmers now use to make business decisions every year. Further, the Farm Stewardship approach addresses one of the most common concerns from the agricultural community about regulatory approaches and requirements - that they are "one size fits all." Farm stewardship plans recognize that every agricultural operation is different and assess each operation to find the combination of practices that will achieve results effectively and efficiently for that particular operation.

Improving Urban Water Quality Too

By G.M. "Jeri" Thorsberry, Black Hawk County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Member

Every Iowan lives in a watershed and yes, Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy can provide clean water for all if we pull together — agriculture, industry and municipalities. To succeed in improving our water quality for all Iowans, those who live in cities and towns need to increase their awareness of their contribution to Iowa's water quality problem. We know that 93% of all Iowa's land is devoted to agriculture and the remaining land has many acres of lawn. In fact, if we counted all the land planted as lawns in the United States, it would be our nation's 5th largest crop!

Additionally, oil and other chemicals washing from streets and parking lots, lawns, industrial sites discharging pollutants, power generating facilities and waste water treatment plants releasing heated water into cold streams affect urban water quality. Runoff from hard surfaces carry sediments, pollutants, heavy metals and trash. Not only is this water entering creeks full of pollutants, it is also warmer in temperature. When rain water hits hot hard surfaces, it causes the runoff to warm. Warm water can have negative impacts on water quality by impacting the amount of oxygen that is available in the water.

Homeowners affect water quality, and can improve the quality of their neighborhood streams and creeks by taking a few simple steps.

- Use phosphate-free fertilizers and detergents. Phosphorus is a nutrient that algae feed on; too much phosphorus in the water creates massive algae blooms. When the algae die, bacteria feed on it. Because there are so many algae in the water, the bacteria go on a feeding frenzy of their own and they use up all the oxygen in the water in the process. This will cause other aquatic life to suffer greatly or completely die out. Most lawns have plenty of phosphorus as it is; purchase fertilizer with '0' as the second number in the nutrient rating. Most commercial dish detergents are now phosphate-free; double-check just to make sure.
- Plant natives. Iowa's native grasses, trees, and flowers are better suited to grow in Iowa than any other plants. Many of Iowa's native plants have extremely deep roots that help to reduce the need for fertilizing, mowing, and other maintenance. Planting natives will rebuild soil health, attract desirable butterflies, songbirds, and other animals, and allow your lawn to absorb more water than it otherwise would, reducing the runoff delivered to local waterways.
- Get your soil tested. Only by knowing the health of

your soil can you apply the correct amount of fertilizer. Contact your local extension office for help with soil testing or Iowa State University's Soil and Plant Analysis Laboratory for a soil testing kit.

- Be smart about fertilizer application. When you apply fertilizer, use common sense. Refrain from applying it on hard surfaces, like driveways — it will only wash into streams and feed algae. If you spill fertilizer where you do not want it placed, sweep it up. Make sure your fertilizer goes where it is desired, saving money for you and improving water quality for everyone else.
- Capture rainfall. Rainfall that does not go into the ground (infiltrate) runs off into the storm sewer and local streams, carrying precious topsoil and nutrients with it. You can capture rainfall and prevent this by installing a rain barrel at the end of downspouts, planting a rain garden, or by installing porous patios and driveways. Allowing rainwater to infiltrate the ground instead of running off will keep expensive fertilizer and topsoil on your lawn and garden and out of the water.

There are many urban conservation practices available that can be installed to help mitigate the damage being done in our watersheds. Many of the conservation practices have cost-share funding available to help with the costs of installing these practices. In each county, your local Soil and Water Conservation District has information about these conservation practices and available funding.

Over many centuries, Iowans have changed the historic hydrology of the landscape. These changes began with the conversion of prairie and wetlands to cropland. With the industrial developments and urbanization of Iowa, we continued to harm our water quality. And now the time has come for each of us to take action to treat the water that falls on our own property before it flows into the storm sewer AND into our streams and rivers.

Here are two YouTube segments that speak to the Dry Run Creek Watershed conservation efforts in Cedar Falls.

Watershed Projects:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVFtT6F3HSo>

Water Snapshot Event

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR68XqS6gQY>

LWVIA Advocacy Committee:

2013 - 2014

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These individuals are our experts in the different areas of our Legislative Priorities 2014. We consider them our “Go To” people who can answer questions and explain complexities of the any particular legislation or issue that might arise in the coming year.

First Call to Convention:



LWVUS has initiated the First Call to Convention 2014 in Dallas, TX on June 6 - 10, 2014. Plan to join League leaders from around the country to this biennial event - to hear nationally known speakers, learn more about the issues important to the organization and the nation, participate in training sessions and join the discussions that make the League a strong and vital force in our democracy. Go to <http://www.lwv.org/content/first-call-convention-2014> to find out more about the First Call to

Convention, including deadlines for receipt of program planning; proposed amendments to the bylaws; election of officers and directors; and adoption of LWVUS/LWVEF budgets; At last convention the bylaws were amended so that each local League shall be entitled to at least one delegate; when local League membership reaches 50 voting members, the local League shall be entitled to one additional delegate; thereafter one additional delegate shall be authorized for each additional 50 voting members.



Priority 1: Increase public safety by decreasing overuse of incarceration:

Reduce crack sentence to powder cocaine penalty

- It's time to update the law to equalize the thresholds for crack to that of powder cocaine. In Iowa, crack carries a much stiffer penalty than powder cocaine. Under Iowa law, prohibited acts involving more than 10 grams of crack currently carry the same penalty as offenses involving more than 100 but less than 500 grams of powder.
- Cocaine in any form produces the same effects once it reaches the brain. Cocaine is a fine white powder, bitter to the taste. When inhaled or injected, it causes a numbing effect. "Crack" cocaine is a smokeable form of cocaine made into small "rocks" by processing cocaine with sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and water. The physiological and psychological effects of crack and powder cocaine are the same and the drugs are now widely acknowledged as pharmacologically identical.
- Only eight other states have a sentencing disparity, three states have repealed the sentencing disparity, and the other state never adopted such statute.
- IA Dept. Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CJJP) research analysis suggests this disparity in penalties contributes to the disproportionate incarceration of African Americans. Iowa is at the top of the nation in disproportionate incarceration of African Americans. CJJP verifies that within Iowa African Americans make up only 3.1 percent of the general population in Iowa but they account for 25.2 percent of the prison population.

Reduce mandatory minimums

- In the last three decades mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses have led to large increases in Iowa's prison population, many of whom are low level and non-violent. Drug offenders rose from 2% of the prison population in 1988 to a high of 26% in 2005 and stands at 23% of the prison population in 2011.
- Mandatory penalties shift power from judges to prosecutors and remove judges discretion to consider mitigating circumstances. Restoring judicial discretion in sentencing would ensure that punishment is proportional to the crime with consideration to individual circumstances without ignoring culpability and public safety.
- Mandatory minimum sentences do not appear to deter future criminal activity, as return-to-prison rates were slightly higher for those who received mandatory minimums sentences than those who were eligible for them but whose terms were waived. If mandatory minimums were eliminated for low/moderate risk offenders, it would result in significant savings without increasing recidivism. See "Outcomes of Mandatory Minimum Sentences for Drug Traffickers" presented by the Public Safety Advisory Board to the Iowa legislature in December 2011.

Modernize penalties for HIV transmission toward increasing public safety as recommended by the IA Dept. of Public Safety

- Iowa Code 709C summary: A person commits criminal transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus if the person, knowing that his or her HIV status is positive, engages in intimate contact with another person. Exposing someone to HIV, whether or not the virus is transmitted, is a class "B" felony with up to 25 years in prison. There is no evidence that 709C is an effective deterrent, and it may sabotage public health efforts.
- Research shows transmission laws do NOT positively influence the behavior of people with HIV. Such laws may actually make HIV-infected people less willing to get tested (i.e., you cannot be charged if you do not know your status) and less willing to disclose their HIV statuses because of fear of prosecution or prejudice.
- Placing responsibility exclusively on people with HIV dilutes the public health message that everyone must protect him- or herself. People may (wrongly) assume the law means they're not at-risk and not responsible for using protection with people whose HIV statuses they do not know.
- Testing and treatment work best to lower Iowa's collective viral load so that fewer people become HIV infected. Science-based prevention focusing on respect and communication is more effective than threats of prosecution.

Eliminate requirement for a person convicted of IA Code Section 709.4 (2) (4) to register as a sex offender.

- Current law requires a teen convicted on lascivious acts with a child following a consensual relationship with a younger teen to be on lifetime parole as well as lifetime placement on the state sex offender registry.
- Senate File 385 would allow early discharge from parole and remove restrictions on movement imposed on those who are listed on the sex offender registry.
- Senate File 385 would give judges discretion to allow or deny discharge and offer victims an opportunity to testify. To be eligible, offenders would have to complete sex offender treatment and be rated as a low risk to re-offend.
 - Facility and community-based crisis services - including but not limited to a 24 hour crisis hotline, mobile crisis response teams, 23 hour observation beds, acute care beds, crisis stabilization facilities, and crisis residential services
 - Sub-acute services - facility based and community based
 - Justice system involved services - including but not limited to jail diversion, crisis intervention team training, mental health courts and civil commitment prescreening
 - Advances in the use of evidence based treatment - including but not limited to positive behavior support, assertive community treatment teams and peer self-help drop-in centers



Priority 2: Increase public safety by funding treatment opportunities:

Repeal the requirement for county mental health dollars to be sent to the general fund to reduce equalization dollars. Those dollars can then be used by regions to facilitate the development of CORE and CORE PLUS services such as jail diversion and crisis intervention services.

- This is a repeal of the Medicaid offset in SF446
- Counties are already financially strapped, people are losing services and waiting lists are being formed - and we have a long way to go in making services available
- Core Plus services include:
 - Facility and community-based crisis services - including but not limited to a 24 hour crisis hotline, mobile crisis response teams, 23 hour observation beds, acute care beds, crisis stabilization facilities, and crisis residential services
 - Sub-acute services - facility based and community based
 - Justice system involved services - including but not limited to jail diversion, crisis intervention team training, mental health courts and civil commitment prescreening
 - Advances in the use of evidence based treatment - including but not limited to positive behavior support, assertive community treatment teams and peer self-help drop-in centers

Increase funding for mental health/substance abuse treatment & resources in order to divert individuals from the criminal justice system as well as successfully treat offenders in the community.

- Community-based services are less costly than the criminal justice system.
- Outcomes are better for persons with mental health/substance abuse issues, their families and the public when treatment is available in the community.
- Community services should ensure that a continuum of quality care is provided across the ages and the span of mental health/substance abuse diagnoses. Treatment should be evidence-based, designed to meet the needs of the individual, and when appropriate, include trauma-informed care.
- A continuum of quality community-based treatment services may allow some individuals to be diverted from the criminal justice system while others may have improved outcomes while on community-based probation and parole.

LWVIA supports an unbiased, intensive review on the future of the Iowa Juvenile Home and other state juvenile facilities. Further, LWVIA supports the efforts and recommendations of Disability Rights Iowa in addressing the deficiencies.

- Disability Rights Iowa first did a monitoring visit to IJH in November 2012. They found three girls who had been living in isolation cells for months. This led to Register articles and a number of recommendations from Disability Rights Iowa to better protect and treat youth at the Iowa Juvenile Home (IJH).
- Since the initial investigation of the IJH, the Department of Human Services has made many positive changes, including a change of leadership, changes in the use of seclusion and restraint, and training of staff in Trauma-Informed Care, Science of Human Behavior, Building Rapport, Treatment of Maladaptive Behavior, Leaving the Door Open to Seclusion and Restraints, and Handle with Care.
- The Governor with Executive Order 82 created a Task Force to determine how IJH moves forward. The recommendations from the task force are due on October 15.
- While waiting for recommendations of the Governor's Task Force and Legislative Committees, Disability Rights Iowa have five critical questions which they would like to see addressed:
 - How can IJH transition from a corrections-based system to a system based on trauma informed care, treatment and recovery?
 - How could the IJH be a pilot program for improving the children's mental health system?
 - What can Iowa do to ensure that youth aging out of the IJH have the education, skills and plans that they need to move into adulthood?
 - What type of oversight is needed to ensure that the IJH is keeping residents safe?
 - Should the school and residential facility be managed separately?

Sustaining Effective Fire & Emergency Medical Services in Iowa - Statewide Study:

LWVIA 2013-14 Statewide Study:

Key Topics:

1. Are Iowans in all geographic areas of the state receiving effective fire response and emergency medical services?
2. Do the variety of federal and state laws and regulations and local ordinances that authorize and/or require the provision of fire and emergency medical services ensure equitable and effective services are available statewide?
3. Are fire response and emergency medical services that rely upon volunteers adequately staffed with volunteers willing to commit to continued participation? Which, if any programs, policies and incentives, are best suited to maintaining existing ranks and recruiting new volunteers?

Background: In Iowa, emergency fire response and emergency medical services are provided by a mosaic of organizations established in various ways.

Some are staffed entirely by “career” fire fighters and emergency medical technicians; others are staffed

entirely by volunteer fire fighters and emergency medical technicians; and others staffed by a mix of career and volunteer personnel. Many of the volunteers receive no compensation and donate their time, while others are “paid on-call” or “paid by call.”

Organizational structure varies. Some are departments of cities, others of townships, while others are privately organized non-profit organizations. Some large businesses maintain internal fire services. In some places, fire and emergency medical services are provided by the same agency, in others provider agencies are separate.

For the most part, this “system” appears to have served Iowans well. But recent anecdotal evidence suggests that some areas are experiencing less than optimal responses to fire and emergency medical calls.

Study Plan: The committee will conduct most work online. (Accommodations will be made for those not online.) Occasional face-to-face meetings will occur, with effort to meet at locations around the state.

Interested in Participating? Please Contact:

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