



**IN LEAGUE REPORTER
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF METRO ST LOUIS**

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MAY - JUNE 2015

**ANNUAL MEETING FEATURES
ERIC FEY ON ELECTIONS**

April 25th was a beautiful day for the first annual meeting of the League of Women Voters of Metro St. Louis! Norma Jean Downey hosted us at Friendship Village where the staff provided a wonderful lunch as we visited and then got down to business! Eric Fey, the new St. Louis County Board of Elections director shared his experiences as an observer of elections overseas with wonderful stories and pictures. He also outlined the challenges faced by St. Louis County and Missouri election officials including the need to purchase new voting machines, provide good judges and encourage the public to exercise their right to vote.

We thanked retiring board directors Rosalie Brasch, Pat Jones, and Pat Soraghan for their service and welcomed Barbara Harris, Gwen Moore, and Jane Nettlesheim to new board. Carol Portman, Norma Jean Downey, and Liz Wolkoff were elected to the Nominating Committee for 2016-17. The local program was reaffirmed with the addition that the St. Louis City position in support of legislation that would call for a change in the current method of total at-large election of school board members for SLPS would be updated. An ambitious but prudent budget was approved.

After our work was done, pies donated by Norma Jean Downey were purchased with all proceeds going to the League. A good time was had by all.

STATE LEAGUE SETS AMBITIOUS AGENDA

Representatives from Kansas City, Moberly, Sedalia, Mexico, Columbia and St. Louis gathered at the Lake of the Ozarks on May 2-3 for the 2015 LWVMO convention. Representing St. Louis were Debbie Howard, Marty Ott, Anna Mennerick, Linda McDaniel, and Kathleen Farrell. President Elaine Blodgett greeted the delegates and challenged us to get our communities energized to participate in the political process.

Judge Rachel Bringer, presiding judge, Tenth Judicial Circuit, was our luncheon speaker. She spoke about her own efforts to practice social justice in her courtroom. Representative David Wood, HD 58 R shared the story behind the current School Transfer Bill and talked about the challenges of public education in poor school districts not only in urban areas, but all across Missouri. Mary Merritt from Sedalia was given the Harriet Woods Award for Community Service for her work in Sedalia improvement projects.

There was lively debate over the proposed program for 2015-2017. At the end of the day, the body voted to study Campaign Finance in Missouri, and concur with the Columbia league's position on Mental Health and Medical Marijuana. Those interested in working on Campaign Finance in Missouri should let Kathleen Farrell and Linda McDaniel know. This is an important issue and gives us an opportunity to make a difference.

Officers were elected for a two year term, but a vote on the budget was postponed for 90 days in order to allow the budget committee to gather further information and make recommendations. A copy of the proposed budget will be in the Missouri Voter.

**STATE SENATOR JILL SCHUPP
TO BE GUEST AT
HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE**

The Health Committee will meet on Wednesday, May 20th, at 10am at Faith Des Peres Presbyterian Church, 11155 Clayton Road, 63131 (between Lindberg and Ballas). All Leaguers are invited to attend as Sen. Schupp speaks with us about the 2015 Legislative session and preparations for the future. We will also have an update about legislation that passed during session which ends May 15th.



FEATURE ARTICLES

<i>Annual Meeting</i>	1
<i>LWVMO Convention</i>	1
<i>Message from the Presidents</i>	2
<i>Member Honored</i>	3
<i>Health Legislation</i>	4
<i>Environmental Quality</i>	5-6
<i>Metro Sewer Rate Increase</i>	
<i>Labadie Coal Ash</i>	
<i>Health Committee</i>	6
<i>Legislation Report</i>	7
<i>Transportation Report</i>	8
<i>Member News</i>	9
<i>Executive Director</i>	9
<i>Calendar for May/June</i>	10

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THE BEST VOLUNTEERS IN ST. LOUIS!

After the annual meeting, we sat down to read the year-end reports of our issue committees and voter service activities. One statistic humbled us. Our volunteers logged approximately 4,800 hours this year --- registering voters, speaking to community groups, producing Voter Guides, facilitating candidate and issue forums, producing newsletters, voter education and advocacy materials, powerpoints, and the list goes on and on. Our league is a wonderful community of committed, intelligent, ethical and caring people. It is amazing how many members give of their time, talents, and yes, their money year after year to make a difference in our community.

We hope to take a bit of a breather this summer, but will be starting up some wonderful new initiatives. Please volunteer to be part of the local and state government participation program for new citizens, or the Get Out the Vote program for our local college students. Call the office to sign up for the upcoming organizational meetings for these important new projects.

If you enjoy talking to people about the League please join our Friends of the League fundraising effort. We know that individuals who share the mission of an organization donate to support it. There are many “friends” out there that want to be asked to support our work. We just need to ask. Call the office and say you will help.

We will keep you posted on the state legislature’s final actions. Thank you for all of your wonderful work. We are honored that you chose us to be your presidents for two more years.

Linda C. McDaniel

Kathleen Farrell

Co-presidents

**2015-2016 LWVMetroSTL
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Eden Seminary to Honor K Wentzien

K Wentzien will receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at Eden’s Commencement Service on May 15. Ms. Wentzien has served the St. Louis community through a variety of organizations, primarily in the areas of public policy and social justice. She is well known for her commitment, for her loyalty, and for her hard work in both leadership and support roles in these organizations.



Ms. Wentzien grew up on a farm in Iowa in a very homogenous community. Her awareness of the racial disparity and prejudice that permeated the country began when her high school history teacher spoke of his experiences with an African American unit in the Army and of separate schools, bathrooms and water fountains in the South. In 1961 she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism at the University of Iowa. She feels that her experiences there were just as valuable as the diploma itself, particularly in the area of race relations. During this time when protests often took the form of sit-ins, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke on the Iowa campus, and Ms. Wentzien had the honor of briefly meeting him.

After graduation she worked on a weekly newspaper in Phoenix where she learned more about the racial divisions among the Native Americans, the Hispanic population, and the white community. She lived in Chicago for 17 years through the 60’s and 70’s when segregated housing and racial profiling were being challenged by a growing number of people. Ms. Wentzien and her family have lived in St. Louis for more than 35 years where she has devoted her volunteer activities to organizations dedicated to helping to heal, celebrate and respect our differences. She has been a strong advocate for Eden Seminary and her husband Paul is a former Eden Board of Trustees member, serving in various positions including Chair.

The organizations Ms. Wentzien has served include the American Friends Service Committee in Chicago, the League of Women Voters, various local government commissions, Focus St. Louis, Care & Counseling, the Deaconess Foundation, and Webster-Rock Hill Ministries. She has been an active member of Pilgrim Congregational Church (UCC) in Oak Park, Illinois and First Congregational Church of Webster Groves (UCC) in Webster Groves.

More recently, the importance of the arts and restorative justice practices have led her to positions on the boards of Webster Arts, the Center for Women in Transition and the Webster Groves Juvenile Conference Committee.

In her continuing service to the League, K is currently leading the Webster/Kirkwood Unit and serving as Chair of the Investment Committee. She has served in many positions over the years. She was elected president of LWV St. Louis County in 1985, and served as president of the merged LWVSTL from 1999-2001.

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HEALTH LEGISLATION

Watching and Waiting for Improved Health Care Coverage

The state of Missouri continues without health care coverage for many of our working poor. The Pew Charitable Trust report revealed that nationally more than half million adults sought treatment for their serious mental conditions last year. These people who are diagnosed with serious mental illness, serious psychological stress, or substance use disorder live in the 24 states who failed to close the coverage gap. Helping these people through Medicaid expansion would provide access to mental health care through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) health care law. During this session, the MO General Assembly has not negotiated and found a way to provide this desperately needed care. (May 15 ends this Session.)

The District of Columbia and 26 states did expand coverage of the state-federal health insurance to eligible low income adults. These 350,000 people did receive treatment and have improved mental health. The cost of denied coverage involves increased emergency room treatments, homelessness, increased problems for law enforcement, and our deep concern for these people whose lives have been derailed through mental illness.

The enrollment period for A.C.A. insurance through the Marketplace was extended. This helped people who needed insurance to avoid a penalty regarding the A.C.A. requirement that each person must be insured. The total of covered people in Missouri as of February 15 is 253,969. The Cover Missouri Coalition (a 2013 initiative of the Missouri Foundation for Health) played a large role in the success enrollment. The goal is a 5 year effort to expand health insurance in the state and reduce the uninsured rate to 5% in those 5 years.

Jo Simpson, Health Care Committee member

June 2015 will reveal the fate of Premium Tax Credits as determined by the United States Supreme Court. Approximately 80% of those purchasing insurance through the Marketplace receive assistance to pay the premium through this tax credit. The case will determine whether the credit can be offered in states without their own insurance market available.

Missouri has a federally operated Marketplace. Will the people in Missouri who receive the tax credit suffer? It seems possible. Affordable insurance coverage remains a primary issue. Many other states, many other insured persons may once again be without affordable coverage for health care.

Becky Clausen has helped our health care committee track the tax implications. There are many considerations during this first year of fines for uninsured persons. Income variances are reconciled as annual taxes are filed. Life changes are considered for both tax credits and adjustments in tax reimbursement where indicated.

Both Federal and State impacts will keep our interests focused on health care moving toward quality, affordable, health care for everyone. **Join us May 20 for a briefing from State Senator Jill Schupp.** We will hear the gains (or not) on reaching the League of Women Voters' goal.

Dianne Modrell, Health Care Committee Chair



METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS SEWER DISTRICT RATE CHANGE (continued)

The April *In League Reporter* included the schedule for public hearings to be held by the MSD Rate Commission. The article also had information about the Commission and the rate review process. This issue will briefly outline the proposals and show the impact on rate payers.

There are two proposals covering the period of FY 2017 through FY 2020. One proposal includes a bond issue for wastewater and the second contains a tax structure for stormwater. Both are expected to be on the ballot in 2016. The fiscal year (FY) for MSD begins July 1.

The **wastewater** proposal will give MSD the resources to continue the program of construction necessary to reduce overflows into area rivers and streams, alleviate basement backups and insure water quality. This program has been going on for some years and will continue well into the future. The program is driven by the Consent Decree entered into by MSD and the EPA to meet clean water standards.

From 2017 through 2020, MSD proposes spending \$1.5 billion on the wastewater Capital Improvement and Replacement Program (CIRP). To fund this part of the program, a \$900 million revenue bond issue will be placed on the ballot. **The work must be done so if the bond issue fails, the funding will come from an increase in wastewater fees.** The chart below shows the impact on rate payers with the bond issue (Option A) and the impact if the bond issue does not pass (Option B).

OPTION A: WITH BONDS

	Bill	%Change
FY 16	\$40.72	
FY 17	\$44.72	9.8 %
FY 18	\$49.56	10.8%
FY 19	\$54.91	10.8 %
FY 20	\$60.86	10.8 %

OPTION B: WITHOUT BONDS

	Bill	% Change
FY 16	\$40.72	
FY 17	\$44.72	9.8 %
FY 18	\$73.80	65.0%
FY 19	\$83.46	13.1 %
FY 20	\$96.01	15.0 %

The **stormwater** tax issue is more complex because the present amount you pay depends on where you live. Currently, there are several taxes and a fee. Which of these apply varies within the District. When the District was created in 1954, it covered the area roughly inside I-270. In 1989 it took over responsibility for stormwater in the annexed area of the District. In the area between the City and I-270, subdistricts were created. Each of these subdistricts has a property tax of up to ten cents per \$100 of assessed value to fund activities within that subdistrict. There are other small taxes and a fee which fund basic compliance and emergency response activities district-wide. But the result of the present system is that the funds available for construction and maintenance of the stormwater system vary widely. The proposal will roll back the present taxes and fee, except for the existing \$0.0197 tax for providing regulatory compliance, and create a uniform rate of \$0.10 per \$100 assessed valuation. The tax will begin to fund a more comprehensive storm water maintenance and improvement program.

The schedule for the public hearings was printed in the April *In League Reporter* and is available on the MSD website www.stlmsd.com.

Nancy Bowser
Environmental Quality Committee

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

COAL ASH LANDFILL

The Ameren proposed coal ash landfill has been in the news this past year. The Missouri River provides over 60% of Missouri drinking water. Groundwater near the Labadie landfill is used for residential drinking water and agricultural purposes, and the coal ash ponds are adjacent to the Missouri River. The LWVSTL submitted a letter to the editor requesting action from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

The EPA ruling on Coal Ash standards were finally released 12/19/2014. For the first time, the byproducts of coal-fired power plants will now be subject to federal regulation. In a state like Missouri, which generates more than 80 percent of its electricity from coal, the new standards could have significant repercussions. The rule stopped short of classifying coal ash as hazardous waste. This means that the federal government will not be responsible for enforcing the new coal ash disposal restriction. Instead the EPA is leaving that up to the states and citizen lawsuits. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources is the agency charged with implementing the new federal standards and is currently reviewing the rule to determine its effect.



State regulators have given Ameren the go-ahead to build a new coal ash landfill next to its power plant in Franklin County this past spring. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources approved Ameren's Labadie landfill construction permit. The state agency said that Ameren's landfill plan met or exceeded all the requirements of the new federal coal ash rule — except one (the five mile rule that the base of the landfill be located no less than 5 feet above the uppermost aquifer).

Environmental Quality Committee, LWV St Louis



COMMITTEE MEETING

The **HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE** will meet on the third Wednesday, May 20th, from 10:00 am to noon. We meet at Faith Des Peres Presbyterian Church, 11155 Clayton Road, 63131 (between Lindbergh and Ballas). We are having a special guest: **Missouri State Senator Jill Schupp will be joining us from 10:00—11:00 am.**

Everyone is invited to attend! We would appreciate a good attendance from League Members. We will also have an update about legislation passed this session, which ends May 15th.

Dianne Modrell, Chair
Health Care Committee



LWVMO Legislative Action Report May 2, 2015

The Legislative Action Committee has been very busy following our legislative priority issues during the 2nd session of the Missouri 97th General Assembly and the 1st session of the 98th General Assembly and increasing our visibility at the State Capital. We have maintained some of our on-going priorities and allowed for expanding priorities if needed.

LWVMO Legislative Priorities 2015

The League of Women Voters of Missouri supports:

- Legislative actions that promote ethical and responsible government.
- Voting processes that encourage all citizens to participate.
- Affordable, comprehensive health care for Missouri citizens.
- Tax policies that provide financial stability and adequate funding for all state services.



Some of our activities during the last two sessions included, but are not limited to:

- Conducted interviews with legislators.
- Distributed our Legislative Priority Cards to all members of the General Assembly and State Executive Offices.
- Welcomed candidates on the first day of filing, February 28, 2014.
- Published the Legislative Bulletin during the sessions and prior to Veto sessions.
- Members testified in opposition to bills requiring Photo ID for voting and written testimony was also submitted.
- Joined with the Medicaid Coalition in support of Medicaid Expansion, sent written testimony in support and members participated in Medicaid Action Rallies.
- Closely watched various tax bills aimed at reducing taxes, such as TABOR.
- Members joined with other organizations in Equal Rights-Equal Pay Day Rally for women.
- Attended the Veto Session and the Induction of Virginia Minor into the Hall of Famous Missourians.

Successfully defeated Amendment 7 (sales tax for transportation), Amendment 3 (Teacher Performance Evaluation), and Amendment 6 (Early Voting).

Many thanks to dedicated members who participated in the various activities.

We come together, work together and advance our mission to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

The first session of the 98th General Assembly will adjourn on May 15, 2015. Many bills are currently under consideration in one chamber or the other and some have been assigned to Conference Committees. Stay tuned— it's not over!

Marty Ott LWVMO Legislative Action Chair



MISSOURI TRANSPORTATION: POLITICAL DYSFUNCTION

TRANSPORTATION

Senate Bill 540 would raise Missouri’s fuel tax by one-and-a-half cents to 18.5 cents per gallon. Diesel fuel would see a larger tax increase, going to 21.5 cents per gallon. It would also allow the General Assembly to convert state roads to privately-operated toll roads. Yet, this will not resolve Missouri’s transportation dilemma.

Urban Donors Our political representatives have known for decades that Missouri’s transportation is managed for political gain rather than effective operation. In 2003, the Brookings Institute named us ‘Urban Donors.’ Distribution of the gas tax in Missouri “appears to penalize cities and urban areas...These areas contribute significantly more in tax receipts than they receive in allocations from their state’s highway fund or through direct local transfers.” Over 10 years Missouri overfunded rural areas \$3.1 billion; and underfunded urban areas \$3.2 billion as compared to other states.

At 34,000 miles, MoDOT has the 7th largest highway system in the nation. Yet Missouri is 18th in population, 18th in land area, and 18th in revenues for highways. To be 18th in state highway miles, MoDOT would have only 12,000 miles. So, why does MoDOT have almost triple the highway miles for state size and funding? Probably for political reasons, MoDOT took over virtually ALL roads classified as Rural Collectors from rural counties and towns. Other states accept only about HALF. This represents 65% of MoDOT’s road miles and 45% of its bridges.

What’s more, MoDOT accepted responsibility for 7,000 miles of rural roads (20% of MoDOT’s miles) which are too local to receive federal funds. Expensive! Most states have less than 100 such miles. Highway funding is generally 80% federal and 20% state. So, these 7,000 miles cost MoDOT FIVE TIMES as much as federally funded roads. In effect, MoDOT needs funding for 62,000 miles or about five times what they have funding for – 12,000 miles. No wonder MoDOT has proposed tolls: Stan Musial Bridge, I-70, Senate Bill 540.

Highway Robbery: For 10 years, urban drivers received only 35¢ on their gas and auto sales tax dollar. Rural drivers received \$4.31. St. Louis County Municipal League noted, “The MODOT system is over-weighted with rural roads and currently spends a disproportionately high amount on rural roads...” By the way, MoDOT’s responsibility for extra rural roads is duplicate funding. Missouri drivers already contribute 25% of these taxes to counties and cities exclusively to fund local roads, streets and bridges. The majority of these funds go directly to rural governments, even though the majority is paid by urban drivers. Also, studies show that St. Louis drivers pay an extra \$125 per month in added repairs, gas and other costs due to our deficient roads. There are also far more fatalities on city highways than rural.

Groping for a solution, on February 4, 2015, MoDOT passed the 325 Plan. This anti-urban plan EXCLUDES ALL construction funding to high traffic streets and bridges – but only in cities. Lightly traveled rural roads and bridges will continue to receive construction funding. In St. Louis there will not be any construction funding for state owned portions of Lindbergh, Kirkwood Rd., Lemay Ferry Rd., Lewis & Clark Blvd., New Halls Ferry Rd., Lucas & Hunt Rd., Natural Bridge Rd., Page, Clarkson Rd., Olive, Manchester, Watson, Gravois, Tesson Ferry, Telegraph Rd., Kingston Dr., Broadway. If a bridge or street becomes unsafe, MoDOT will simply close it. This hits every city in the state.

Zero Mass Transit Funding: Unlike most states, Missouri’s archaic, anti-urban 1950’s constitution does not permit transportation taxes to fund mass transit. This explains why Kansas City’s transit system has one of the smallest ridership for a city of its size in the nation. In Greater St. Louis, Illinois regularly supports Metro Link by millions more each year than Missouri. Progressive states, like Illinois, allocate 15% of such taxes to Federally Funded programs like mass transit, elderly, and bike services state-wide. Our transportation dilemma will continue to harm all Missourians’ economy, environment, and especially our safety.

This is a special report from our transportation expert, Gwen Moore.

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TRIBUTES & MEMORIALS

The League received a contribution in honor of Paul & K Wentzien from Michael & Bette Bohannon.

The League received a contribution in memory of Jeanne Van Allen from Doris Flowers.

We were saddened to learn of the passing of two treasured League members, Avrom Handleman and Jeanne Van Allen. They will be remembered for their League work and we will have memories of good times shared with them. We extend our sincere condolences to their families and friends.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Spring is finally here. Now we will turn our attention to clerical tasks in the office. There is always something that needs to be done, could be done, or should be done. If you have any extra time to spend with your League friends please contact our volunteer coordinator, Barbara Harris at 314.968.3609 or email Barbara at MBJH@charter.net. We look forward to working with you over the summer.

Our volunteers since our last newsletter include: Liz Aurbach, Stephen Aylward, Brenda Banjak, Mary Brown, Lori Calcaterra, Esther Clark, Jim Clark, Becky Clausen, Marjorie Courtney, Mickey Croyle, Sue Dellbringge, Norma Jean Downey, Joan Esserman, Kathleen Farrell, Agnes Garino, Betty Ann Gilbert, Eve Golden, Mickey Hall, Barbara Harris, Debby Howard, Nancy Hutchins, Pat Jones, Kathleen Lottenbach, Renate Lytle, Linda McDaniel, Nancy Miller, Cindy Mitchell, Tom Mitchell, Dianne Modrell, Carolyn Nolan, Marty Ott, Carol Portman, Nancy Price, Mary Beth Reynolds, Sydell Shayer, Judith Smart, Pat Soraghan, Catherine Stenger, Billie Teneau, Pam Todorovich, Kayla Vaughan, K Wentzien, Louise Wilkerson, Sue Williams, and Liz Wolkoff.

This list includes the St. Louis board members. When you attend a board meeting, please remember to sign the volunteer book in the office so we have a record of our volunteers' hours. We appreciate your commitment to the League.

Julie Behrens, Staff



From the Executive Director's Desk



It is both the season for graduations and the end of this General Assembly session. Both of these things give us good reason to reflect on the importance of education and the power of information. What has been the influence of education on your own civic engagement? How does the source of information influence policy making? Who do you know who might benefit from the valuable resources we produce and provide at the League of Women Voters? How does the League educate, inform and influence? How should we educate, inform and influence in the future?

Anna Mennerick

