



PRESIDENT’S CORNER

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The summer is half way over and we will again be meeting Thursday, August 1st. I’ve been doing some reading of early American history this summer. My readings about James Wilson, one of the most influential, yet rarely written about framers of our Constitution, were enlightening. In a speech he gave July 4, 1788 he says:

“A progressive state is necessary to the happiness and perfection of man. Whatever attainments are already reached, attainments still higher should be pursued. Let us, therefore, strive with noble emulation. Let us suppose we have done nothing, while any thing yet remains to be done. Let us, with fervent zeal, press forward, and make unceasing advances in every thing that can support, improve, refine, or embellish society. ... The commencement of our government has been eminently glorious: let our progress in every excellence be proportionally great. It will – it must be so.”

That’s what we, the League of Women’s Voters strives to do – we “press forward ... [to] support, improve, refine, or embellish society.” An opportunity to “press forward” is coming our way. Several years ago, with the strong and vocal support of the LWV same day voter registration became a reality for Montana. As anyone knows who’s made a recent move timely getting yourself registered to vote can be a challenge. During the 2012 Montana Legislative session, a referendum was introduced to repeal the same day voter registration. The Legislature decided to send the legislation to the voters as a referendum, Legislative Referendum 126. It will be on the 2014 ballot. We are working with other organizations, which support our voter rights positions. With your help we will be able to keep same day voter registration in Montana.

Read about our August and September speakers, later on in the VOTER. Jean Zankner has done us proud with interesting and thought provoking speakers.

See you August 1st.

Theresa Schneder

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NEWS FROM THE LEAGUE

AUGUST 1, 2013 MEETING

As you are aware the LWV US is undertaking an update to our National Agricultural Policy and our Billings League, under the leadership of Mar Jane Albrecht is studying Montana agricultural issues. Our speaker for August will address some of the concerns.

Ressa Charter, rancher from the Roundup Bull Mountains, will speak on a national food system of growing qualify, organic food, that preserves land and water.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2013 MEETING

The status of women and girls in Montana is important to the flourishing of our communities and the health and welfare of families.

Jen Euell, Program Director of the Women's Foundation of Montana, will speak to us about the Foundation and the recently completed study, entitled "Status of Women in Montana."

Supreme Court Ruling

The Supreme Court ruling on "Shelby County Alabama v. Attorney Gen. Eric Holder," issued June 25 in a 5-4 ruling struck a serious blow to voting rights in the United States. The Court, championed by Chief Justice John Roberts, declared that Section 4b of the Voting Rights Act is unconstitutional. Section 4 gave the 1965 law its real teeth, requiring certain state and local governments to submit plans to change the voting process in their jurisdiction to the Justice Department before enacting them. This was only used for those jurisdictions with a clear history of discrimination, and represented a major tool to prevent new discriminatory processes. The Supreme Court is requiring that Congress must act to enact new statutes to determine which jurisdictions are to be covered. This effectively eliminates enforcement of the rest of the law with the current Congress in power.

This comes as a bitter surprise to voting rights advocates, since it removes a very inexpensive and efficient way of monitoring voter discrimination on the basis of race. At a time when 38 states enacted voter ID laws to suppress minority votes in the last election, the loss of this one safeguard in some jurisdictions is a serious loss. All of this makes our voting rights priority in Montana more important than ever. We may also need to provide material and other kinds of support to LWV in other states to safeguard the rights of so many in the next election.

The Voting Rights Act won nearly unanimous renewal by both Houses of Congress and the signature of President George W. Bush in 2006.

Submitted by Aline Russell

Summer/Fall 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST

- Thursday 1st General meeting open to the public, 11:30 to 1:00 p.m. at Elk's Club
 Ressa Charter will speak about national organic food system of growing quality food that preserves land and water
- Monday 19th Board meeting, 4 to 6 p.m. at 303 N. Broadway, Billings.

SEPTEMBER

- Thursday 5th General meeting open to the public, 11:30 to 2:30 pm, at Elk's Club.
 Jen Euell will speak about the Women's Foundation of Montana 's study of Montana women
- Monday 16th Board meeting of newly elected Board, 4 to 6 p.m., at 303 Broadway, Billings.

OCTOBER

- Thursday 3rd General meeting open to the public, 11:30 to 1:00 p.m., at Elk's Club.
- Monday 21st Board meeting, 4 to 6 p.m., at 303 N. Broadway, Billings.

NOVEMBER

- Thursday 7th General meeting open to the public, 11:30 to 1:00 p.m. Elk's Club
- Monday 18th Board meeting, 4 to 6 p.m., at 303 N. Broadway, Billings

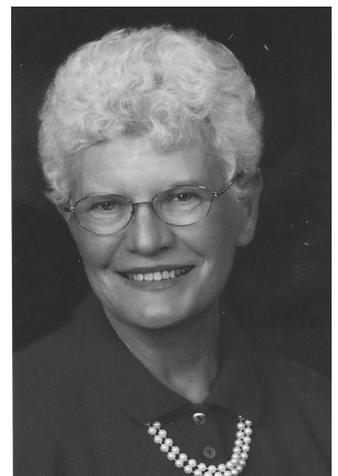
LWV-Billings MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS: Judy Allen

Judy was born in Wyoming, but has lived in Billings since 1964.

She retired from the Billings Gazette after a 20-year career, starting in Production and finishing in Classified Advertising.

She and her husband spend the warmer months at their home in Polson. Please come by if you are in the Flathead Valley or on your way to Glacier Park. Call first... 406-883 -2669; they enjoy visitors.

Her favorite times are spent outside... golfing, fishing or just walking... enjoying our beautiful state.



LWV-Billings MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS: Marina Graham

Keeping with the Last Best Place theme, Marina wants you to know that she's been nowhere she'd rather live than this sparsely populated state where there are only two degrees of separation, if that. She's lived in Billings for 19 years this month after residing in the most overcast and gray climates you can imagine. Who knew the sun was shining just 350 miles east of Missoula? She may never leave Billings after learning how wonderful and uplifting it is to witness the glory of sun in the winter.

Aside from learning about sun, she's also learned in most recent history that the League of Women Voters in Billings are a group of fantastically intelligent women trying to make the world a slightly better place. Marina's family always sat around discussing politics and current events before she knew what impact either would have on her life. As fate would have it, likeminded people somehow bump into one another and provide a feeling of home.

For most of the 19 years in Billings Marina has remained somewhere in the background working in one supportive capacity after another. Whether it was raising a family of two boys or working on behalf of those who need extra support in life, it's one of the driving forces in her life. Becoming the editor of the LWV-B Voter was yet another natural transition and outlet for her talents.

Currently she's been exploring talents left simmering on the back burner for too many years: writing, playing cello, and designing artwork or even sculpture for the yard.



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Please make my donation to:

LWV of Billings (non-tax deductible)

LWV (Ntnl.) Education Fund for future Billings events (tax-deductible-make check payable to LWV of Billings Education Fund)

Community 7 TV, Democracy Now Programs (Make check payable to LWV of Billings)

I wish to remain anonymous.

Amount enclosed: _____

Learning about Gracious Space, Board Responsibilities, and Ground Rules for Meetings

Review by Betty Whiting

The Board of the League of Women Voters of Billings (LWVB) had a retreat on May 20 at Janice Munsell's home to learn more about Board responsibilities and how we can help LWVB become a leader in opening up public conversations about issues of concern to everyone.

Mary Hernandez of Invisage Consulting facilitated a discussion on "Gracious Space: A Practical Guide to Working Better Together" by Patricia M. Hughes with Bill Grace. Through a grant with Humanities Montana, eight Montanans have been trained on how to "invite the stranger to learn in public."

"Gracious" is described as generosity of spirit. Each of us has something to bring to the space; recognizing the gifts others have as well as our own is a first step. Knowing we can learn from others becomes an act of graciousness. That spirit of interest in others is what we bring to the space.

Setting up the space, the vessel, in which we engage others comes next. The space needs to be comfortable and safe for all. Being open to others, allowing them to come within our bubble, makes us vulnerable, so it takes courage to set the stage where others are free to speak. We develop questions so others speak out and we really hear, understand, and learn the answers.

With this gracious space, we are ready to invite the stranger, those who think/act/feel differently. It also demands that we recognize the stranger within ourselves, ideas that we have not felt comfortable expressing. The stranger is to be honored and valued for what is brought to the space.

Finally, as we meet with the stranger within this gracious space, learning in public means letting go of what you've learned and what you think you know. It means letting go of being right.

Creating a gracious space is a valuable process by which we can promote the common good, one that we can use at any public meeting we attend, but particularly at our own LWVB meetings.

Mary Hernandez also gave us materials from "Exceptional Board Practices" with the reminder that "Every nonprofit is a business; Ignorance is no excuse":

- Fiduciary responsibility: general liability and director/officer insurance
- Calendar of meetings; memorandum with other groups
- Officer and operating committee job descriptions
- Continued learning programs and practices
- Strategic thinking/planning throughout the year
- Accountability with viable goals and priorities
- Fundraising – divide it into small steps
- Transparency: newsletters, websites, Facebook

The Board had fun listing all the Ground Rules we could think of for a good meeting: active listening, enthusiasm, come prepared, have structure, inclusiveness, manners providing a sense of safety, respect for all with genuine caring, speak honestly, no hidden agendas, identify the elephants (issues we're not talking about but we know are there), identify the red flags (issues that are uncomfortable to talk about), no bird walks (going off the trail), everyone participate, be mindful of the time.

"Help me understand." "Tell me what you are thinking." "Remember it takes time to excel." Phrases to confront the stranger. The LWVB is on its way to being an exceptional organization promoting the common good with a commitment to learn in the public arena.

The Billing League of Women Voters 2013 – 2014 Board, elected at our April Annual meeting, or continuing in office are:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>
President:	Theresa Schneder	2014
Vice-President:	Nancy Detrick	2014
Secretary:	Jean Ott	2015
Treasurer:	Janice Munsell	2015
Member at Large:	Susan Dickson	2014
Member at Large:	Connie Rasky	2014
Member at Large:	Judy Allen	2015
Member at Large:	Aline Russell	2015

Following are Board members appointed according to our By-laws:

VOTER Editor:	Marina Graham
Chair Publicity & Comm:	Betty Whiting
Chair Voter Registration:	Carol Gibson

May Membership Meeting

We were fortunate to have as speakers for our May 2nd membership meeting two members of the state legislature, Roger Webb (R) and Virginia Court (D).

Rep. Webb told us about the high learning curve for a first time member of the House. He was amazed by the volume and variety of bills. One bill had to do with regulating the sale of pickles in Montana. Another one involved defining the term “wild bison”.

He felt good about HB 2 which resulted in a balanced budget and a \$180 million surplus. The budget included the doubling of funds for Senior Services, a tuition freeze for college students and on property taxes for school levies. He was pleased with the business equipment tax decrease. He carried bills SB 187, 188 189 which related to domestic violence issues. He also worked on a bill dealing with the problems of RX drug abuse. He thought the new school funding bill is an improvement to the present law.

With regard to the Medicaid expansion Rep. Webb said he was opposed to it passing as in his view it “is pie in the sky as the federal government is broke” and if passed the Medicaid expansion “could bankrupt Montana”. He was pleased that the legislature was able to cut the DPHHS budget which he said may eliminate 500 unnecessary jobs. He alleged that the department received a \$5million rebate from pharmaceutical companies which they put in a “slush fund” instead of using it for services.

Rep. Webb said Montana currently has only 7 oil drilling rigs in Montana and that he thought HB 175 was “based on a dream of energy expansion” in our state.

Rep. Virginia Court listed highlights of the session as being the bills to shore up the state pension systems and the pay plan for state employees. She was also pleased SB 175 passed, as it improves the way the state funds public schools. She saw HB 5 as a positive as it will fund an addition to the science building at MSUB in Billings. Also on the up side were bills passed regarding term limits (this will be a referendum) and to expand insurance for small businesses, bills strengthening elder abuse laws and increasing penalties in child abuse cases.

On the down side she noted that there will be a referendum on the next ballot to delete same day voting. She was also discouraged that a “bill on dark money failed” as well as one designed to abolish the death penalty in Montana.

The members questioned Rep. Court and Rep. Webb after their presentations. —Reporting, Jean Zankner

MEMBERSHIP INTEREST RESPONSES

At the Annual Meeting forms were passed out for all to indicate their interest in being involved for different activities. Below is a list of the activities with the members interested in various activities. If you are listed and still interested in a particular activity, get with and contact and speak with the others who expressed an interest in the activity.

For those of you who are interested in the Billings Municipal Court study group, the Review of Billings LWV positions, and the March 2014 Sunshine Week program please meet with me after our August 1st meeting to chat about what we do next.

STUDY GROUPS:

Agriculture: M.J. Albrecht, Barbara Gies, Susan Dickson & Connie Rasky

Billings Municipal Court: Maria Beltran, Judy Senteney, Aline Russell, Jan Buehler & Theresa Schneder

COMMITTEES:

Archive: LaVerne Frank & Judy Senteney

Publicity & Communications: Betty Whiting, Chair

Membership: Nancy Detrick & Susan Dickson, Co-chairs

Observation Corp: No one signed up

Development Committee: Susan Dickson & Theresa Schneder

Governance: Janice Munsell, Chair, Committee: Judy Senteney, Aline Russell, Connie Rasky

2014 – 2015 Budget: Janice Munsell & Connie Rasky

60th Anniversary Committee: Betty Whiting, Maria Beltran & Theresa Schneder

Host State convention 2014: Judy Allen, Nancy Detrick, Carol Gibson & Janice Munsell

Review Billings LWV Positions: Barbara Gies, Betty Whiting, Judy Senteney, Aline Russell & Connie Rasky

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