



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

League of Women Voters of
Berrien and Cass Counties
ANNUAL REPORT
2009 – 2010

*90 Years &
100 Members
Strong!*

Wednesday, June 23, 2010
Orchard Hills Country Club

League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties

ANNUAL REPORT

2009 – 2010

**Presented to the Membership at the Annual Meeting
Wednesday, June 23, 2010**

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League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties Annual Dinner/Meeting Minutes – 2008-2009

Dinner and Social Hour:

The meeting was held on Wednesday, June 17, 2009 at the Orchard Hills Country Club in Buchanan, Michigan, the social hour being at 6:00 pm and the dinner at 7:00 pm. Cost: \$25.00.

The guest speaker was David Brown, editor of the Herald-Palladium newspaper whose topic was the future of newspapers and journalism with an emphasis on our local newspapers and watchdog journalism.

Mr. Brown has been with the Herald-Palladium for 25 years, Managing Editor for the past 12 years. He confirmed that the way news has been delivered has changed dramatically over those years, and will continue to change due to the costs, the competition, changing physical preferences of the readers, and the alternate sources of news.

Interestingly enough “Do Not Call” and the Internet have been their two biggest enemies: the first because where for a long time print newspapers were extremely profitable, the internet has now captured much of their advertising dollars; and the second because of the internet’s increasingly widespread use and the range of immediate news that’s available over it.

Furthermore a la carte electronic, pay-for-what-you-want, service will lead to deterioration of print news’ menu. Google News links you to papers with articles about whatever you’re interested in without any cost to Google for the research behind that news. Of course neither does it carry with it the built-in trust of a local paper’s journalists and material.

The greatest loss this change creates is that a local newspaper lets the community look in the mirror and see its real self. This community thrust is missing in the large papers owned by media conglomerates.

LWVBCC Annual Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, June 17, 2009

Present: Susan Gilbert, Diane Heemstra, Marion Hogenboom, Alice LaHaie, Richard Lindblade, Bonnie Pollack, Lorraine Stepanek, Ginny Washburn , Sara Bode and other members. A total of 32 attendees.

Minutes to the 2008 meeting were approved as distributed.

Announcements: The President made the following announcements:

July 22 - Candidate Forum will be held for Three Oaks Township Board.
August 24 - Annual Foods Potluck Dinner with speaker Dr. Arden Andersen speaking on “How Safe is Your Food?”
September 14 – The Book Group will meet at Education Chair Liz Ennis’ home (location and date changed since the meeting). The book is to be *The Shame of the Nation* by Kozol.

Membership – It was announced to cheers that Lorraine Stepanek had reached the “100 members” mark –especially nice since it was her (75th) birthday!

Approval of the 2009-2010 Budget – The budget, which had been approved by the board at its May 19, 2009 meeting, was approved as presented. Bonnie Pollack moved and Jean Sharp seconded.

Treasurer’s Report – We have stayed within budget, but the biggest expense, per member payment (PMP) to LWVUS, will be coming in August, and dues won’t be coming in till October. That charge of \$50.20 per member means that our League is sending out more money than it is taking in, since the board had decided that our dues would remain \$50.00 per member. We look to contributions to keep us solvent in the interim, and it was to that end that Jean Sharp made an unexpected and generous donation of \$500.00. Thanks very much, Jean! (The dues are being kept low to keep them affordable.)

The suggestion was made that we send the Newsletter out electronically. But following discussion it was agreed to stay as we are since many like to hold and keep newsletters. With ads the newsletter pays for itself. Furthermore, Topp Press, which prints the newsletter, also contributes formatting services, which would have to be replaced if hard copy was abandoned.

Election of Board Members:

New Board: Candace Broecker (new), Diane DeWitt, Elizabeth Ennis (new), Mary Ann Johnson, Joe Naines and Bonnie Pollack (new)

Continuing Board members: Gilbert, Heemstra, LaHaie, Lindblade, Stepanek and Washburn

“Retirements”: Bode, Hogenboom and Lanan

Officers and Positions will be:

Susan Gilbert and Darlene Heemstra – Co-Presidents
Bonnie Pollack – Treasurer
Ginny Washburn - Secretary
Candace Broecker – Membership
Lorraine Stepanek – Voters Service

Diane DeWitt – Natural Resources
Liz Ennis – Education
Joe Naines – Adult Education
Alice LaHaie – Social Service
Mary Ann Johnson – Finance
Dick Lindblade-Local Government/Special Projects

Susan thanked the past board for their effort and for their good attendance and said that those going off board would be missed.

Program 2009-2010 - There will be three main issues: Climate Change, Education and Health Care. There will also be a state emphasis on Prisons in Michigan, and we will collaborate with the Census Bureau to help assure that the 2010/11 Congressional Redistricting is done accurately.

Report on LWVMI Convention – Susan’s report is attached, but one important note is that the Convention voted to adopt as LWVMI’s position our own LWVBCC study and consensus position on CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations)...the ultimate compliment!

There being neither Old nor New Business, Joe moved, Jean seconded and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara G. Bode
Secretary

**LWVBCC Year-To Date 2009-10 and
Proposed Budget 2010-2011**

	2009-2010 Budget	Year to Date May 13, 2010	2010-2011 Proposed Budget
Expenditures			
Operating Costs			
Newsletter & printing	700.00	540.35	700.00
Postage	525.00	364.28	525.00
Insurance	70.00	61.10	70.00
Office Supplies	20.00	0.00	20.00
	1,315.00	965.73	1,315.00
Board & Administrative			
President	20.00	0.00	20.00
Secretary	20.00	0.00	20.00
Treasurer	20.00	0.00	20.00
Board Tools & Expenses	20.00	0.00	20.00
<i>Administrative Committees</i>			
Finance	300.00	194.85	300.00
Membership	100.00	432.44	400.00
Meetings & Arrangement	1,850.00	1,550.76	1,850.00
Programs	50.00	0.00	50.00
	2,380.00	2,178.05	2,680.00
Delegates			
State Convention	0.00	0.00	600.00
National Convention	600.00	0.00	0.00
Workshops	50.00	0.00	50.00
Lake MI LWV	70.00	70.00	70.00
	720.00	70.00	720.00
Financial Support			
State PMP Individuals	892.50	892.50	1,585.50
State PMP Households	787.50	787.50	252.00
National PMP Individuals	1,241.00	1,236.00	2,249.90
National PMP Households	1,095.00	1,095.00	357.60
Lake MI LWV	25.00	25.00	25.00
	4,041.00	4,036.00	4,470.00
Educational Activities			
Publications	30.00	21.80	30.00
Voter's Service	100.00	11.05	300.00
Donations	150.00	100.00	200.00
Miscellaneous	0.00	0.00	
	280.00	132.85	530.00
Position Support/Action			
National	25.00	0.00	25.00
State	25.00	0.00	25.00
Local (Inc. website)	180.00	165.48	180.00
	230.00	165.48	230.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	8,966.00	7,548.11	9,945.00
Income			
Dues Individuals	2,125.00	2,200.00	2,860.00
Dues Household	1,875.00	1,875.30	1,920.00

**LWVBCC Year-To Date 2009-10 and
Proposed Budget 2010-2011**

	2009-2010 Budget	Year to Date May 13, 2010	2010-2011 Proposed Budget
Drawn from Ed Fund	300.00	800.00	400.00
Contributions			
Members	800.00	905.00	880.00
Members Ed Fund		110.00	0.00
Non-members	600.00	875.00	600.00
Non-members Ed Fund		100.00	0.00
Publications & League Products	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Other (from below)	3,266.00	2,233.62	3,285.00
Ads	1,000.00	1,025.00	1,000.00
Meetings/Misc.(2009-10)	1,750.00	1,135.00	1,750.00
Grant (for voter education)			500.00
Fundraisers/Savings	516.00	73.62	35.00
TOTAL INCOME	8,966.00	9,098.92	9,945.00

NOTES:

PMPs 2010-2011

State Individuals \$21.00
State Household \$31.50
State Student \$10.50
National Individual \$29.80
National Household \$44.70
National Student \$14.90
Lake MI LWV \$25 total

Note: Income from Ed Fund used for National PMP

Co-President's Report

Co-Presidents' Report – Susan Gilbert & Darlene Heemstra

One of the most noteworthy things about this LWVBCC year is that we had co-presidents, possibly a first for this League but quite common with all sorts of organizations these days. Darlene was also treasurer of the Village of Three Oaks, which was supposed to be part-time but didn't seem to work out that way. So Darlene ran the Board meetings and worked with the new treasurer, Bonnie Pollock, while Susan attended to the other duties that come with the job.

The League year starts on July 1, just after the Annual Meeting. The first event of the year was a forum for the candidates for Three Oaks Township Board. Three candidates were vying in a special election to replace the late Diane Jelinek. The next event of the summer was our second local foods picnic at Chikaming Township Park. Diane DeWitt organized this and the weather was so spectacular, again, that we decided we would always have the picnic on August 24.

In the fall we had two really informative meetings for the members and interested public. On October 12 all four of our state legislators (Jelinek, Tyler, Proos & Lori) joined us for a whole morning of questions and discussion followed by a lovely lunch at the new Wheatberry Restaurant in Buchanan. Then in November we had another lunch meeting, at Fernwood in Niles, with Mike Mortimore and Nikki Britten of the Berrien County health department. We learned a lot about the health of county residents from a new study and tried out some interactive computer software that worked remarkably well.

Also in November our membership chair Candace Broecker organized a membership meeting at the Livery in Benton Harbor with special guest speaker Andy Shaw of the Better Government Association. Several new members joined as a result. Our membership has flirted with the 100 number for awhile, but for the first time our official January 31 number on the LWVUS database was exactly 100—a record!

The holiday party was time to celebrate and great fun and Lorraine and Jim Stepanek hosted again. Thank you two both so much!

Our field trip for the year was to the St. Joseph County jail in South Bend where 12 hardy members toured the jail and had lunch. All this in preparation for our meeting on prisons almost two weeks later to participate in the possible update of the LWVMI position on prisons. We were pleased to have the chair of the LWVMI prison study, Kay Perry of the Kalamazoo League, come to lead our discussion.

The big event of the spring was the annual public meeting on May 6. Every year for the past several years, we have attempted to explore a timely and important topic with one or more expert guest speakers. This year's topic was "Detroit: Toward a Sustainable Future" with a panel of four speakers from Detroit, each from a different organization and perspective. It was a wonderful meeting. As is often the case, the speakers were as

impressed with the intelligence and involvement of the audience as we were with their dedication and expertise.

We also put together a voters guide for the May school board election for the five Berrien County districts where there were contested elections. See the Voters Service report for more details on that.

In September and April we had book group meetings. These have been so well received that the new chair of the Book group, Annette Van Dusen, proposed at the April meeting that we read four books a year, a proposal that was enthusiastically received. We have read an outstanding group of books over the last few years.

We undertook a special project this year, which was to try to encourage people to participate in the census and, especially, to get snowbirds to fill out the appropriate household form to show they are Michigan residents. The census numbers allocate money and power, such as federal aid to the states and representation in Congress.

This July 1 Darlene and Susan will hand over the co-presidency to Diane DeWitt and Elizabeth Ennis. We have both been proud to serve and will continue to be active in the organization on and off the Board.

Committee Reports

Treasurer – Bonnie Pollack (See Budget)

Membership – Candace Broecker

In November of 2009 Membership held an event at "The Livery" in Benton Harbor featuring former Channel 7 News anchor, Andy Shaw who now heads the "Better Government Association" in Chicago. He spoke about the current political environment in Chicago and the need for reform. He outlined some of the approaches the BGA is using to clean up Chicago politics. The program attracted a number of non-members. Thirteen people joined the League and we reached former membership chair Lorraine Stepanek's goal of 100 members!. No specific Membership events have been held this spring but a membership letter was sent out in April.

We continue to seek diversity in our membership and are exploring different options to help us accomplish that goal. There are no current plans for the Fall membership event and I look forward to any and all suggestions concerning possible speakers and venues.

Education – Elizabeth Ennis

This year's focus on education began with a book discussion of Jonathan Kozol's THE SHAME OF THE NATION: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America. Discussion group members expressed a desire to give voice to the issue of greater funding for early childhood needs and an over emphasis on the use of state testing to

evaluate students and schools. It was agreed that an effort be made to monitor the outcome of the new federal program called Race to the Top. It was unknown at the time what the program required of schools and whether any improvements were to be made in the mandated requirements of No Child Left Behind.

A group of volunteer committee members agreed to further discuss the identified issues and consider composing a letter to Mr. Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education to explain our League's thoughts on the above. After further consideration it was determined to learn more about the new Race to the Top program and review the application requirements which states have to meet in order to win federal dollars for school improvement. A whopping \$4.35 billion dollars has been allocated through the U.S. Department of Education. It was thought that our best efforts might be to follow the money and become informed on how our local school districts would use it to improve their schools. Michigan filed application for this competitive grant but was not awarded Race to the Top funds. Only two states were successful, Delaware and Tennessee. A June 1 deadline has been set for phase 2 applications. Our state falls in the range of 200-400 million dollars available for an award should we successfully meet requirements. As we wait for more news on Michigan's award status, we will continue with our intent to follow the money.

Adult Education – Joe Naines

Adult Education

In the past year, GED Adult Education has made significant strides in serving adults without a high school credential.

A year ago, Oklahoma Scoring Service (OSS, in Norman, OK) announced new procedure for scoring GED test takers (five subject tests; writing with essay, social studies, science, literature, and mathematics). Internet Service was added to USPS and FedEx/UPS. Internet service is accessed through special scanning devices. In our case (Berrien County jail/GED school), we acquired a Fujitsu scanner and we were #2 online, a week after Michigan State University. Scoring time was reduced from 10 days to 10 hours of less, depending on through-put service at OSS. The time reduction is important to inmates who get 30 day sentence reduction when they earn a GED certificate.

Now it becomes important for high school dropouts to achieve their GED. The current test series, the fourth since 1945, will be replaced with series #5 on January 21, 2012. The new series will include updates in all subjects comparable to recent changes in US high school subjects. For example, math will have additions of algebra 2 and pre-calculus.

We also expect "the bar will be raised" on passing scores, now at 410 minimum per subject and 450 overall average (out of 800). Currently, 500 represents the top half of all current high school graduates. Below 450 is failure (the bottom 40 percent).

Finance – Mary Ann Johnson

Finance Committee Report – Mary Ann Johnson The 2010 fall Finance Drive totaled contributions of \$2,040. Non-members and friends donated \$950 and League members contributed \$1,090. After expenses of \$236.60, our net income was \$1,803.40.

Local businesses contributed \$1,050 for advertisements in our newsletters. We encourage members to support these local business owners and to thank them for their support of the League.

Bentwood Tavern	Johnson Insurance Agency
Center of the World Woodshop	Joseph Naines
DeWolfe Casual Clothing	Rossmann Insurance Agency
Harrington Auto Shop	Schlipp's Pharmacy
Heath and Company	Stay and Obey
Infinitas	Sweet Haven Resort
Local Color Gallery	The Villager
Nadra K	

The Fund Drive Committee members this year were Susan Gilbert, Betty Oostenbrug, Lorraine Stepanek, Ginny Washburn and Mary Ann Johnson, Chairman.

Natural Resources – Diane DeWitt

The Local Foods Potluck was again a delicious evening of many creative and delicious dishes. Of course, the weather cooperated and again Barb Presti provided beautiful centerpieces from native and cultured flowers.

Merrill Clark attended the Lake Michigan League of Women Voters meeting. She reported that the group discussed several issues that face the states surrounding Lake Michigan, including Healing Our Waters (HOW) and the effects of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO's) on Lake Michigan. The LMLWV position on CAFO's originated with the LWVBCC position on these farming operations.

There are a lot of active people trying to solve many, many water-related problems. I am still trying to ban bottled water from everyday use. The incredible waste and usage of oil and the leaching of who knows what into the water could be so greatly reduced by just bottling your own filtered tap water and reusing the bottle.

Social Services – Susan Gilbert

Both locally and nationally the focus of our Social Services program this year was on health care reform. Long time League member and former social services chair Alice LaHaie had hoped to be able to serve through this effort, but age and health forced her to resign in August 2009. So I picked up the torch as best I could before passing it on in

April to new chair Judy Scully. Judy, former professor of nursing at Loyola University and community health specialist, will do an excellent job and has the background for it.

The LWVUS position on health care calls for a single payer system, but knowing back in 1990, when the position was adopted, that a single payer system might not be readily achievable, the position also supports the kind of reform efforts that were considered in the current debate. The LWVUS sent out numerous Action Alerts urging us all to contact our Senators and Representative. I did so to every one as co-president on behalf of our League.

Locally, I wrote a couple of letters to the editor in support of health care reform and also an essay that was posted on our website. Health care reform was also the topic of some newsletter articles and e-mails to the membership.

As the time approached for the final House vote, it became obvious that Michigan Congressman Bart Stupak, leader of a group of 12 Pro-Life Democrats unhappy with the slight possibility of abortion funding in a bill they otherwise supported, was the key. Mr. Stupak represents Michigan's 1st Congressional District, which includes all the Upper Peninsula and the top third of the Lower Peninsula. We have five local Leagues in his District plus we are all residents of Michigan. Working with the LWVMI office and utilizing their new action software, we got out an action alert to all online Michigan Leaguers urging them to call Mr. Stupak's office. We probably weren't the only ones calling (we certainly weren't the ones who threatened Mr. Stupak), but the report was his office was swamped with calls and e-mails. And he voted in favor of the bill! This is the kind of thing that keeps you going, although we are sorry Mr. Stupak ended up deciding to retire from Congress.

So now we are on to implementation and Professor Scully already is making plans to help guide us through that.

Voter Services – Lorraine Stepanek

In October of 2009, the League hosted a Legislative Luncheon at Wheatberry Restaurant featuring State Senator Ron Jelinek, Representatives Matt Lori, John Proos and Sharon Tyler. The legislators each gave presentations about the challenges facing the Michigan State Legislature, then participated in a question and answer session with the audience.

There were a number local races in the 2009-2010 year. Following a League candidate's forum in July, Ellen Block won a 3-way race for Three Oaks Township Trustee in August, 2009. In May, the LWVBCC created a voters' guide for five contested school district elections in Berrien County. Candidates were asked to respond to three questions including why they were qualified to be a school board member. Their responses were sent to local newspapers and posted on the LWVBCC website. The League is looking forward to hosting forums for both Democratic and Republican candidates in the 79th State District primary race.