



League Lines

The Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Larimer County

CrossCurrents

On Thursday, February 28 from 7:00-8:00 p.m., the LWVLC CrossCurrents Team will host "CITY EMPLOYEE UNION: WHO BENEFITS?" at the Fort Collins City Council Chambers, 300 Laporte Avenue. The public is invited to attend and to submit questions to the panelists. The audience is respectfully requested to arrive and be seated 10-15 minutes before the broadcast begins at 7:00p.m. sharp.

The program can be viewed on Fort Collins Cable Channel 14, Loveland Channel 16, or via broadband live streaming or video-on-demand at www.fcgov.com/cable14. It will be replayed periodically throughout the ensuing month on the city cable channels in Fort Collins and Loveland; check your local listing. Fort Collins Public Libraries will also carry copies.

The next CrossCurrents program will be in April. The topic will be announced by e-mail in the April Mid-Month Update.

Inside this issue...

Note from the Editor	2
Membership Corner	2
Great Decisions	3
Observer Corps	3
Affordable Housing	3
Voter Service	3
Growth Team	3
Larimer Cnty Courts Study Team	3
Civil Liberties Reading Group	3
CrossCurrents	4-5
Think Before You Ink	6
Hermit Park Tour	6
Congressional Votes Tool	6
UNA	6
Calendar of Events	7

Judges Address Role of Federal and State Courts in Colorado

on March 17 from 7 to 9 pm at the *Coloradoan* Community Meeting Room

Our Courts is a joint activity of the LWV of Colorado, the Colorado Judicial Institute and the Colorado Bar Association, providing nonpartisan information programs to audiences throughout the state to further public knowledge and understanding of the state and federal courts in Colorado.

On Monday, March 17, at 7 p.m., the Hon. Christina M. Habas and the Hon. William W. Hood of the Denver District Court will talk about the role and importance of fair and impartial courts in applying and preserving the rule of law. Their presentation will cover a review of the Colorado state and federal courts; the selection, discipline and evaluation of judges in each judicial system; information about trial and appellate courts; and a discussion about where the public can get more information about the Colorado courts.

The meeting, to which the public is cordially invited, will be at the *Coloradoan* Community Meeting Room, 1300 Riverside in Fort Collins, starting at 7 pm and ending at 9 pm. There will opportunity for open discussion at the end of the presentation.

Most of us have very little contact with the courts. A 2007 survey by the LWV of Colorado Education Fund found that a majority of voters vote "blind" in judicial retention elections -- with many citing lack of needed information about the judges on the ballot and almost all stating willingness to use such information if available.

The meeting is a program of the Civil Liberties Team of LWVLC, and they hope League members will take advantage of the presentations by Judges Habas and Hood to become better informed citizens about the judicial system and judges in Colorado.

There's Still Time To Get Your Theatre Tickets!

Tickets for the March 7 performance of "Nickel and Dime," presented by Open Stage Theatre, are still available by contacting Carol Rush in the next few days (667-5077) or crush@frii.com. LWVLC has reserved 50 seats for the performance of this play based on Barbara Ehrenreich's book of the same name. It describes in detail the difficult life of those trying to make a living on minimum wage salaries. We need to sell 50 tickets at \$20 each. Get in touch with Carol if you and you with friends can make it!

HELP!! At our annual Program Planning in January many people put their "dots" by Colorado's fiscal policies as a topic they considered worth studying. Now we cannot find those people. Anyone interested in forming a group to study Colorado's fiscal policies, please contact Carol Rush at (667-5077) or crush@frii.com.

A Note from the *League Lines* Editor

For the past 3+ years our League has delivered the newsletter by e-mail, with many good results. We have saved money because there is no need to pay for postage or printing. Using e-mail has also allowed us to have more articles and take up more space, because there is no need to pay for postage or printing. The electronic version of the newsletter has made our League environmentally friendly because it does not use paper and saves trees, and because it does not require the use of an automobile and saves gasoline.

Another advantage of the electronic version of the newsletter is that it saves time and labor. It takes approximately four hours/month to

- (a) put the newsletter together,
- (b) e-mail the newsletter to every member, and
- (c) upload the news to our website.

Once these steps are completed, everyone who has an e-mail address will have received the electronic file of the newsletter. A member can choose to save the electronic version on their computer, print out a hard copy on their printer, or go to our website (lww-larimercounty.org) and read the news there.

However, in order to also mail hard copies to those choosing not to take advantage of one of the above-mentioned options, it then takes at least another three to four hours of valuable volunteer time and miles to

- (1) take the newsletter to the printer,
- (2) pick up the newsletter from the printer,
- (3) purchase postage,
- (4) add the new names (as needed) to the hard-copy mailing list and print out mailing labels,
- (5) affix stamps, labels, and those sticky things that hold the newsletter together, and
- (6) then go back to the post office with the newsletters and hand them to the clerk because they are what are called "flimsies" and cannot be dropped into the mail box.

The Administrative Team has decided that beginning with the April 2008 newsletter, a hard copy of the newsletter will no longer be mailed to anyone having an e-mail address. This is being done in order to, among other things, save valuable volunteer time. If you do not have an e-mail address, you will continue to receive a hard copy of the newsletter by snail mail.

Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated by all those involved in producing the newsletter.

Membership Corner

Sally Broste and her husband moved here a year ago from Virginia, where she retired after teaching 8th grade. They had previously lived in Colorado Springs, love the mountains and knew they wanted to return to the West following retirement. During the 1960's Sally served in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia. She and her husband have raised 3 boys and are now enjoying their first 2 grandchildren who live in Montana.

Marilyn Collins originally hailed from a small town in Washington. After college she became a teacher and eventually taught overseas. When her husband was transferred to CSU to teach military science they moved to Fort Collins where they have remained as retirees. Marilyn currently volunteers with Meals on Wheels and Bright Beginnings. Marilyn has become active in the Great Decisions, and describes herself as an active "political junkie". She is still exploring the best fit for her in the League.

Please make these changes to your roster:

Barbara Carson's e-mail is now barbaralcarson@comcast.net.

Bev Schmitt-Bacon's e-mail is bjw614@comcast.net.

Becoming Reacquainted... **Carol Rush** has be-



longed to the Larimer County League of Women Voters for 8 years. Carol joined League because she has always been interest in the political process and wants to encourage others in how to be active.

She thinks League is a terrific place to meet people and work toward a common goal. Her areas of interest in League are Affordable Housing, Growth and Administrative Teams. Carol is a retired teacher, and has taught at different elementary levels in California and Colorado. Her hobbies are reading novels and history, and hiking. Her current volunteer work is with the Neighbor to Neighbor Affordable Housing Program and she also helps at the Adult Learning Center in Loveland.



Great Decisions

During his two terms as president, Vladimir Putin has attempted to remake Russia into a major world power. Some of his recent policies have concerned the U.S. and Europe. With a 2008 Russian presidential election expected, what course will Russia take?

Great Decisions will focus on Russia on Monday, March 3. All meetings are held at Plymouth Congregational Church in Fort Collins from 11:30 to 1:30, and guests always welcome. (Check for signs when you enter the building as the meeting room might be changed.)

The April Great Decisions will be on Monday, the 7th when we will discuss Latin America. Contact Kay Easley for further information: 282-0135; easleykw@aol.com.

OBSERVER CORPS

Basic to effective League activity in a community is an understanding of how local government works. Members of the observer corps attend meetings of elected bodies such as County and City Boards. A local League Observer is the eyes and ears of the League, learning how government works and about issues that are or may become items for local study and action. The Observer is in a good position to monitor government bodies for information of importance to the League and the community.

At the present time we have observers who attend monthly meetings of the Larimer County Commissioners, Fort Collins Regional District Library Board of Trustees, Fort Collins Affordable Housing Board, and Loveland Affordable Housing Commission. It would be useful to our membership if we also had Observers for the City Councils of both Loveland and Fort Collins, and for the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council.

Participation in the Observer Corps is an interesting and rewarding experience and is also a useful way of keeping our membership informed about the current activities of our government bodies. If you are interested in contributing some time and energy to this activity, you will find that it is a very rewarding experience. There will be an opportunity to sign up and get more specific instructions at the next membership meeting.

Charlotte Rehnberg, Observer Corps

It has been decided that the Affordable Housing Team will not be in operation for the year 2008-2009 because of an insufficient number of team members.

VOTER SERVICE

The Voter Service Team is in need of people who are willing to help with voter registration drives and who are able to go through a brief training session. This is now mandatory EVERY YEAR! The three people who are certified trainers on behalf of our League are: Wanda Mayberry (482-8742), Judy Siple Bushnell (493-9674), and Gerry Lake 472-9771). Volunteers should call one of these people to make arrangements for training.

The Voter Service Team is also looking for a new team chair (or co-chairs) who can take over the leadership in June. There are a lot of workers on the team and we are undergoing a very concerted effort to get all our procedures and activities organized and easily retrievable. This should be an easy task for a new leader just waiting to volunteer. NO EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY!!! Anyone who thinks she might be interested should contact the current team leader, Carol McDivitt, at 669-4090, mcdivittc@mindspring.com.

Growth Team

The next meeting of the Growth Team will be on Tuesday, March 4, at 12:30 pm at the home of Georgia Locker (713 Duke Square in Ft. Collins). Please call 482-4875 with questions. Everyone is welcome. The team will be discussing where to go with their energies and would welcome input.

The Larimer County Courts Study Team will have its first meeting on Friday, April 4, at 1:30 p.m. at the home of Sidna Rachid, 1002 Alexa Court, Fort Collins (377-9568). League members interested in helping to gather information about the Larimer County courts (8th Judicial District) are welcome. If you have questions, please contact Florence Field, fnfield@comcast.net

Civil Liberties Reading Group

The Civil Liberties Reading Group held their first meeting on February 19 with nine people in attendance. The group enjoyed a lively discussion of the first two chapters of Jeffrey Toobin's *The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court*. The group will continue to meet on the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 18 at 1:30 (location TBA). Contact Linda Hutchinson for further information (667-9214 or lindahutchinson@frii.com.)

CrossCurrents

CrossCurrents will soon celebrate the beginning of its 20th year of existence! Created in 1989, the CrossCurrents monthly television program seems almost synonymous with its creator by the same name, the CrossCurrents Team of the League of Women Voters of Larimer County (LWVLC). The program is developed by this Team and produced by the City of Fort Collins in cooperation with the League. Its mission, which has remained constant over the years, is to provide a public forum for a balanced and fair discussion of controversial issues facing the community. Linda Mahan, one of the original members of the Team, puts it this way: "Its mission is to bring together panelists with differing viewpoints to discuss critical issues facing the community, county, state or country that relate to public policy decisions." She added that effort is made to seek a variety of perspectives that can be discussed in a calm rational manner while avoiding emotional "pro and con" polarization. The ultimate objective or hope is that viewers will subsequently make up their own minds on an issue and follow through to contact public policy decision makers to voice a more enlightened, more knowledgeable opinion or recommendation. This mission embodies the national League position that "democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government."

Other members of the founding Team were Barbara Rutstein, Nona Thayer, and Mary Lyons. Barbara recalls the inception of the program series: "It was learned that Columbine Cablevision, the City's cable company at that time, was obligated by its contract to allow public access programming. The Team contacted the Arapaho County LWV, which al-

ready had a program series, to glean some tips on getting started. CrossCurrents' first programs were televised in the Columbine Cablevision studio." Linda added, "Fifty or 60 personal invitations would be issued for studio viewing, of which twenty people would typically attend. The small size of the studio prohibited invitation of the general public."

Linda recalls that one of the first CrossCurrents programs focused upon solving problems created by the abundant goose population in Fort Collins. It was titled "Barefoot in the Park." Another early program dealt with the elk overpopulation in the Estes Park area. Some problems just don't go away!

Over the years, programs have focused upon topics as diverse as education, environment, Southwest annexation, Instant Runoff Voting, roundabouts, and downtown Fort Collins. The Team has not shied away from such potentially inflammatory issues as gun control, sex education, immigration, parental rights, welfare reform, or the Patriot Act. Recent programs have included "What will Power the Grid in 2030?," regarding advantages and drawbacks of various potential raw energy sources for production of electricity, and "Fiscal Crisis and the Colorado Constitution." Panelists have included state legislators, among them Andrew Romanoff, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Colorado, who introduced, for the first time, on the latter program a plan he had to resolve the State's fiscal crisis. Other panelists have come from as far away as Washington, D.C. or have been as prominent as Susan Solomon, a subsequent Nobel Laureate, who addressed the topic of fluorocarbons in the environment on a CrossCurrents program. Susan Solomon was

(continued on the following page)

among those receiving a 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for study of global warming.

Long-term moderators on the CrossCurrents program over the years have been Kate Duncan, Betty Cummings, Sue Ellen Charlton, and Barbara Rutstein. Currently, Jan Gilligan is Team leader and Barbara Rutstein is moderator. Other current Team members are Nona Thayer, Beth Daugherty, Beverly Schmitt-Bacon, Linda Knowlton, Mary (Robertson) Atchison, Halcyon Enssle, Merete Cunningham, and Karen Wagner. The group possesses exceptional passion for grassroots involvement in the political process and several have gone on from their solid experience in League to hold public office.

To make certain that a timely topic is chosen, this hard-working Team generally develops each program within a month. They peruse newspapers avidly to identify and learn the backgrounds of topics receiving abundant press coverage. They read the letters to the editor to learn which current issues seem most controversial to readers. They network. They interview and screen individuals who are knowledgeable about the chosen topic, usually selecting four who are articulate and represent different perspectives to become panelists. In addition, whirlwinds of meetings, phone calls, e-mails, and letters are required before a program can emerge. Due to time constraints, these can become frantic chaos, if appropriate and willing panelists are difficult to find! The Team prepares focus questions for the panelists. These questions are designed to draw out the background of the issue, as well as the varying viewpoints and areas of agreement and disagreement. The moderator strives to keep a balance in the time each panelist speaks. Each hour-long program generally concludes with information on ways that the public can become involved in the issue. Approximately 50-60 hours may go into the plan-

ning and presentation of each program, not counting the input from the City, with whom LWVLC has an annual contract. To attract a wide audience, programs are publicized through various media outlets, including local and regional newspapers, radio and television stations. The public is invited to attend the live broadcast and to participate by submitting questions on the topic. These questions often help to enliven and extend discussion. Programs are now televised in the Fort Collins City Council Chambers at 300 LaPorte Avenue. Eight programs are typically produced each year. It is estimated that over 500 panelists have participated since the inception of the program.

The CrossCurrents program series is one of the most visible projects of LWVLC. The local television-viewing audience has the opportunity to watch the program live or to see one of many rebroadcasts. Fort Collins Library District sites carry copies (originally videotapes, now DVDs) and copies of programs of interest to Loveland or Estes Park residents are sent to television stations in these communities. Viewing is now also available on the internet to broadband customers via online streaming or video on demand. The CrossCurrents series is quite unique within LWV. The Larimer County Team has received inquiries from other LWV chapters regarding planning and implementation of similar series. Jan Gilligan concludes, "Perhaps the greatest impact CrossCurrents has had over the years is that it helps let our community know what LWV can do. Many in the community hear about League during the election cycle as a result of the fine work of the Voter Service Team, but CrossCurrents reminds them that the League is also working to inform them of an array of public policy issues throughout the year."

LWV Alerts Voters on Signing Petitions **"THINK BEFORE YOU INK"**

(Editor's note: This comes from LWV of Oregon)

The League of Women Voters is encouraging its members and the public to be cautious during this period of circulation of initiative petitions. Voters will be asked to sign a variety of initiative petitions "just to get it on the ballot so people can vote on it." The League is telling voters, "Your signature is valuable, more valuable than your vote, considering that far fewer signatures are required to qualify a petition for the ballot than votes to pass it on the ballot. Only sign an initiative petition that you believe belongs on the ballot."

There are six questions voters can ask themselves to help them determine whether or not to sign an initiative petition:

- **Is it complex?** Some issues can be decided by a simple yes or no vote. Complex issues may need to be thoroughly examined and debated in a legislative arena.
- **Is it confusing?** Some initiatives are not well written or contain conflicts that may require court resolution or interpretation.
- **Does it belong in the Constitution?** If an initiative amends the Constitution, consider whether it really belongs there. Is it a fundamental law that should be protected from change? Correcting a constitutional amendment later would also require amending the Constitution, is cumbersome and costly, and requires another vote of the people.
- **How will it be funded?** Is it an "unfunded mandate" that would require the Legislature to take funds from other essential programs? Consider the effect on the overall flexibility of a government budget with already limited revenue. An initiative should generally create its own revenue source, and not earmark, restrict, or obligate a specific percentage of the General Fund revenues.
- **Who is behind it?** You can find out who are the real sponsors and opponents of a petition. Check the Colorado Secretary of State Election site <http://www.elections.colorado.gov>.
- **Before you sign**, ask to see identification of the signature gatherer. Paid signature gatherers are now required to carry a picture ID issued by the Secretary of State, although a new law does not require a paid petitioner to wear or show the ID when a voter asks.

Hooray! April 26 is the Date!

The date for our rescheduled tour of Hermit Park, that is. Rob Novak, Interim Educational Coordinator for Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is all set to guide us through the Hermit Park area, showing us the facility and describing the beauties of the area on Saturday, April 26, 2008. More details about where to meet and the exact times will be forthcoming, but please mark your calendar so that you can take part in this very special tour

LWVUS Congressional Votes Tool

In February the LWVUS announced a new tool for researching congressional votes for the first session of the 110th Congress (2007), listing House and Senate votes on key good government issues. This tool, searchable by member of Congress as well as by issue area, includes key votes on LWVUS legislative priorities. This is a new tool to assist you in your advocacy. Check it out by visiting www.lwv.org and clicking "Take Action"!

Here are some helpful tips for using the votes list:

1. Thank your members of Congress who voted the right way, and encourage those who didn't to reconsider their positions on key good government issues.
 2. When lobbying in the future, research how your member(s) of Congress voted on key LWVUS issues
 3. Customize this press release for use in your own state—and let your community know how your elected officials are doing in Washington!
- Please contact Christina Vamvas at cvamvas@lwv.org with any questions related to the list.

*Please note: The purpose of this resource is not to "grade" or "score" members of Congress, but, instead, to provide an accurate listing of key federal votes. We hope you'll utilize it starting today!

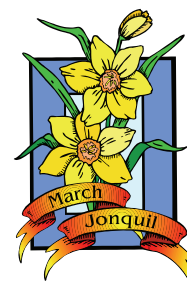


UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

As always, League members are invited to this program of the United Nations Association: Nasir Jalal, a CSU graduate student and Fulbright grantee from Pakistan will speak about Pakistan today and some of the activities of the United Nations in Pakistan. Join us for this timely and interesting presentation! Saturday, March 15, 2:30 p.m., Downtown Library, Fort Collins. For more information call Margaret Smith at 493-3857.

Calendar of Events

Thursday, February 28 7-8 pm CrossCurrents—City Employee Union: Who Benefits?
Fort Collins City Council Chambers, 300 LaPorte Avenue



March, 2008

Monday, March 3 11:30 to 1:30 Great Decisions: Russia
Plymouth Congregational Church, 916 West Prospect Road, Fort Collins

Monday, March 3 Deadline to purchase tickets to LWVLC fundraiser, "Nickel and Dime"
(contact Carol Rush at 667-5077)

Tuesday, March 4 12:30 Growth Team meeting—All are welcome
Georgia Locker's (713 Duke Square, Fort Collins; 482-4875)

Thursday, March 6 Noon to 3 Admin Team meeting
Loveland Public Library, 300 North Adams Avenue, Loveland

Friday, March 7 8 p.m. "Nickel and Dime"
Lincoln Center Mini Theatre, Fort Collins

Monday, March 17 7-9 p.m. Our Courts
Coloradoan Community meeting Room, 1300 Riverside, Fort Collins

Tuesday, March 18 1:30 Civil Liberties Reading Group
Location TBA

Coming in April

Friday, April 4 1:30 Larimer County Courts Study Team meeting
Sidna Rachid's (1002 Alexa Court, Fort Collins)

Monday, April 7 Great Decisions: Latin America

Wednesday, April 9 7-9 pm Civil Liberties: Professor Courtney Daum (CSU) will speak on Supreme Court decisions regarding
privacy issues at Plymouth Congregational Church

Saturday, April 28 Hermit Park Tour

Administrative Team

Judy Filusch
377-2464
filusch@msn.com

Irene Fortune
613-0966
vladimir1992@hotmail.com

Linda Hutchinson
667-9214
lindahutchinson@frii.com

Jodie Rankin
221-2037
rankin812@comcast.net

Charlotte Rehnberg
224-2173
rehnberg@lamar.colostate.edu

Carol Rush
667-5077
crush@frii.com

Mary Jo Shafer
482-4399
mjshafe@msn.com

Judy Siple
493-9674
jabms@frii.com

Barbara Smith
224-3892
basmith@lamar.colostate.edu



**The League of Women Voters
of Larimer County**

League Lines editor:
216 West Fourth Street
Loveland, CO 80537

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Return Service Requested

www.lwv-larimercounty.org



The League of Women Voters of Larimer County
www.lwv-larimercounty.org

The League of Women Voters is *the* organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Our Mission

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.

Our History

Established in 1920, the League is one of the nation's most respected grassroots organizations. We explore issues from many points of view and take action on issues affecting our families and communities.

The League of Women Voters is nonpartisan. We do not support or oppose candidates.