

# **The Oxford Voter – March 2009**

*Making Democracy Work - League of Women Voters of Oxford, Ohio*

## **President's Message**

March, 2009

Dear Friends,

The League of Women Voters of the United States turned 90 years old on February 14, 2009. Congratulations to us as partners in this great organization.

Since I wrote to you last, we have gained two new members. We welcome Barbara Mecklenborg and Judith Kolbas who have begun their memberships by attending and participating in the League meetings in February. Hats off to them!

A very important action alert has been issued by LWVUS. If you feel that you want to do something, please contact our U.S. Representative regarding voting rights for the District of Columbia. The League has supported this position since 1938. The year 2009 promised to be the one in which success would be achieved. However, after the bill passed the U.S. Senate, debate in the U.S. House has been postponed. Opponents of DC Voting Rights are attempting to “derail” the bill by using an amendment that would repeal DC’s gun laws, a move we find objectionable. You may contact Rep. John Boehner by telephone at 1-800-582-1001 or on the Internet at [www.johnboehner.house.gov](http://www.johnboehner.house.gov) . Please ask him to support DC Voting Rights and oppose all amendments. Please write or phone soon after you read this message.

April will be our last month for member activity. On April 6, we invite you to join the Board for a discussion on the future of our League. Please help the Board when it considers various alternatives for the days ahead. On April 29, we will have our final meeting for the year. The Annual Meeting/Local Convention brings our members together to evaluate our program and plan ahead. Please bring the Annual Meeting Booklet with you to use when we examine the budget and by-laws. Our busy year is winding down and it is time to celebrate our good work.

Sondra F. Engel



## **Oxford Tomorrow:**

### **A Community Update**

The outcome of planning in the city and township during the past year was presented Feb. 18 by panelists Kathy Dale, Oxford City Planner; Paul Brady, former chair of the Planning Commission, and Jim Rubenstein, chair of the Township Planning Committee.

Steve Dana, Oxford League Government director was moderator, and Sondra Engel, Oxford League president, introduced four new members.

Over 50 objectives in the city plan emphasize retaining small-town character, infill, and avoiding sprawl. An implementation timeline will be influenced by budget, development approval, capital projects, and economic incentives.

An Oxford Township land use map identifies zones as publicly owned, agricultural, or environmentally sensitive.

Concurrence of the township and city plans would promote stewardship of the shared landscape. Although the goals of the two plans are similar, their stances on highways/transportation and controlling density are totally different. Speakers agreed that the two different documents do provide a platform for discussion and compromise.

Sallie Killian

## **Enjoy the Sunshine March 15 to 21**

The fourth annual national observance of “Sunshine Week,” runs from March 15 to March 21, 2009. This is a time for dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information at all levels: local, state and federal. Such transparency is essential to our democratic society. This fundamental value, however, can be compromised when a culture of governmental secrecy forms in response to fear of our country’s vulnerability.

This happened most recently in 2001 after the terrorist attacks of September 11. We had, and still have, much to fear. But by 2005, the media-led “Sunshine in Government Initiative” was involving journalists, lawmakers, government officials and citizens everywhere in discussions that challenged the culture of governmental secrecy which had developed. Our new President promised on his first full day in office a culture of governmental transparency, participation and collaboration, and to “hold [himself] as President, to a new standard of openness.” We believe the public welcomes this commitment.

During Sunshine Week 2009, we can reaffirm our inalienable right to know what our governments are doing and to judge their actions; and we can raise this question: How can we as citizens promote a government, at all levels, that is transparent and accountable in which secrecy, when warranted, will be the exception rather than the rule?

Toni Saldivar

## **Meet Our Newest Member**

**Barbara Mecklenborg** moved to the Knolls last August after living in Clearwater, Florida for twenty five years. Barbara was already very familiar with Oxford. She went to Western College for Women and her husband went to Miami University so they often returned for reunions over the years. After her husband died, she figured the Knolls in Oxford was a good place for her even though she has two grown sons in Florida. The Knolls keeps her busy but she has found time to be very active in her church and delivering meals on wheels. She has a daughter living in Cincinnati. Barbara says it feels like home living in Oxford.

## **In Memoriam**

**Mary Catherine "Sissy" Dowd**, age 92, passed away January 27. She had moved to Oxford in 1992 to be near her daughter and grandsons. Engaged in a variety of community activities, she joined the League of Women Voters and was a docent at the Miami Art Museum.

## **LWVOhio**

### **Spotlight On...Education Reform Plan Proposed for Ohio's Schools**

by Joan Platz

Governor Ted Strickland's proposed FY10-11 budget includes an education reform plan to modernize Ohio's education system to ensure that students learn the skills to be successful in the 21st century. The plan also, according to Governor Strickland, creates a constitutional school funding system that will adequately support Ohio's schools when fully implemented.

The plan proposes a new Ohio Evidence Based Model (referred to as OEBM or EBM), to determine state aid. When the plan is fully implemented in 8-10 years, the state's contribution to fund schools will increase from the current level of 52 percent to 59 percent. The plan also increases accountability and transparency through a variety of new reporting requirements and oversight by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE).

Governor Strickland and his administration have developed this evidence-based model over the past year with input from business, education, and community stakeholder groups, and from citizens. The Governor hosted a series of community-based "Conversations on Education" from July through December 2008 to listen to ideas from the public about how to create and fund a world class and relevant education system for all Ohio students in the 21st Century.

Governor Strickland's proposed plan completely changes the current school funding system, which is now based on a "foundation level" of per pupil support (base cost per pupil). The new "evidence-based" system provides state aid based on ratios for classroom teachers; art, music, and PE teachers; administrators; nurses; media services; counselors; etc. Funding is also included to support students with special needs, those who have limited English proficiency, and instruction for gifted students. A targeted

poverty index and Instructional Quality Index are included to compensate for the effects of poverty on student learning, and provide support for highly qualified teachers.

The plan also lowers the charge-off (local share of education costs) from 23 mills to 20 mills. It allows school districts that are not at the 20 mill floor to convert millage to the 20 mill floor with voter approval, so that districts can experience growth on 20 mills when property values increase. Any millage that remains above the 20 mill floor will be converted into mills that operate like emergency levies. These changes, according to the Governor, address the impact of HB 920 on school district budgets.

The proposed budget is expected to increase funding for primary and secondary education by 4.7 percent in FY10 and 4 percent in FY11, for a total increase of \$925 million for education over current funding levels.

The Governor's plan will be clarified further through the language of the budget legislation, which is expected to be introduced in the Ohio House over the next few weeks.

For more information please visit the OBM's web site, which includes a number of documents that describe the Governor's proposed education plan.

<http://obm.ohio.gov/SectionPages/Budget/FY1011/ExecutiveBudget.aspx>.

[www.oxford.oh.lwvnet.org](http://www.oxford.oh.lwvnet.org)

In our world of instant gratification, even the League awaits your wish for information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at just the click of a few buttons! Our website has the latest information available on myriad topics. If you want to know what is going on, check it out!

*The League of Women Voters of Oxford reaffirms our commitment to diversity and pluralism which means that there are and shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of League on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.*

## **Dates to Remember**

March 18 (W) Local Efforts in Sustainability

7:30 p.m. Lebanon Citizens National Bank Community Room

April 6 (M) Open Board Workshop

4-6 p.m. Lane Public Library

Members urged to attend this discussion on the future of LWVOx

April 29 (W) Annual Meeting/Local Convention

7:30 p.m. LCNB Community Room

May 1-3 (F-S) LWVOx 58th State Convention

Dublin, OH