



## *Making Democracy Work*

*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.*

# *The Oxford Voter*

November, 2011

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## **Save the Dates**

- Saturday, January 21, 10:00 a.m. – 2 p.m. Marcum Conference center: Program Planning
- Tuesday, February 28, 7:00 p.m. LCNB Community Room: Energy Study
- Thursday, March 22, 7:00 p.m. LCNB Community Room: Privatization of Government Study and Consensus

Mary Jo Clark, Organization Vice President



## **Saturday, January 21, 2012 is LWVOxford's Annual Social and a Chance to Influence the Federal Government.**

**Our 2012 planning session and annual League social is Saturday, January 21, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. at the Marcum Center.** Beginning with coffee and ending with lunch and wine, it is a time for League members, their guests, and interested public to participate and/or watch League grassroots consensus in action.

The business goal of the January meeting is to review and assess for relevance and progress both local and national positions of the League. We will identify possible future studies of specific issues and will make recommendations to the United States and Oxford Leagues' Boards of Directors.

We heard last January that you enjoyed the format of the event, but that you would have preferred to choose which general subject area or Portfolio (the League term): Representative Government, Social Policy, Natural Resources, and National /International you were discussing. The Board heard you and looks forward to our blending *choice, responsibility, and focus.*

*So we have planned time for you to choose an area/Portfolio, study it, and come prepared to the meeting on January 21.*

**Tuesday, December 6** expect an email (US mail slightly later) which will define the top 3 issue choices which a subcommittee of each Portfolio has chosen after studying the 56 positions of the LWVUS.

**By December 15**, you will have the opportunity to choose the Portfolio and the issue which you wish to learn about. You will be sent the 56 positions and the LWVUS web page on which to read about that subject. Further, if you and another colleague want to propose another issue, you are welcome to email back that information. At the meeting on January 21, you will be given an opportunity to propose and persuade from League information.

**If we have not heard from you by December 15, you will be assigned** to a subject area/Portfolio and its issues.

Let's look at the opportunity to find in each Portfolio the truly top need of the nation. When we gather as a whole on January 21, following discussions, what do we see as the nation's most critical issue to be studied by the LWVUS?

Sally Southard, Program Co-Vice President



## **Study Concluded on Federal Government's Role in Public Education**

The Oxford League took up the challenge of a national study on the federal role in K-12 education as our first set of fall programs for 2011-2012. An ambitious study, this process focused on a set of fifteen questions related to common core standards, assessments, and equity issues relevant to public schools. These topics are directly related to the re-authorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, now under discussion by legislators in Washington, D.C.

Oxford members Jane Jackson, Tammy Wood, Ellen Bueschel and Kathleen Knight Abowitz planned and executed the three programs of the study. The first of these was a panel of local experts invited to help League members and our guests better understand the complex issues related to the study: Talawanda Schools Superintendent, Kelly Spivey; historian of education and League member, Kate Rousmaniere; Intervention Coordinator at Marshall Elementary, Mary Beth Bergeron; and reading/literacy expert and new League member, Connie Weaver. This panel, held at Talawanda Middle School in August, was well attended by the local community and prepared us for the consensus process, held in two meetings at the comfortable TMS library in September and October.

### ***What was the result of our consensus process?***

- Oxford League asserted a clear view that education is a vital part of our democracy, but that the current role the federal government is now playing is too large when it comes to testing and assessment.
- Members expressed a clear view that further movement toward more nationalized curriculum and federal testing programs were undesirable.
- Members favored national rather than federal and mandated initiatives to help states move forward with student achievement efforts.
- However, we also thought that the federal government should be doing more in regard to equity issues, and that the public schools should be playing a strong role in helping "level the playing field" for poor children in schools. This includes supporting a federal role in funding early childhood education, birth to 5 years, for all children.

These views will be submitted to the national league later this month, so that the LWV-US can develop its position on these issues.

Kathleen Knight Abowitz, Program Co-Vice President



## **Voter Information Guide a Success**

When I checked with Lane Library about their interactions with people who wanted the Voter Information Guide (VIG), I was told that they gave away their last copy at 6 p.m. on Election eve. As Election Day neared and their supply of VIG's was reduced, they kept the Guides at the circulation desk for people who specifically requested it.

Helen Gorman reports that on November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Oxford League's website had 1,112 requests for pages. There were 4,035 requests from Nov. 1 - 8. It is an honor that so many looked to us for election information.

Karen DeLue, Co-Vice President Voter Services



## **Candidate Forum Review**

In spite of terrible weather, some 80 people attended the Forum. Sally Southard was the moderator and Kathleen Knight Abowitz was the time keeper. We are greatly appreciative to the Knolls of Oxford for use of the great room which, set up facing the patio, was an inviting space. All City Council candidates attended and most of the Township Trustee and Township Fiscal Agents attended even though many Trustees were running unopposed. The School Board Candidates, who were all running unopposed, were all unable to attend.

We also refined the process for turning in written questions to a moderator's assistant who helped with reading and editing the questions. This was a welcome addition to the task of moderating. Steve Dana stood in for Tammy Wood.

This year because we had more time for fewer offices, we found that both the questions and the answers by the candidates were particularly substantive. The viewpoints and the information shared were valuable.

Thanks to Vicki Trostle of the Knolls, Karen DeLue for assisting with arrangements.

Prue Dana, Voter Service Co-Vice President



## **Kids Voting Talawanda 2011**

1445 students voted in a district of 3100. Teachers and Miami University Social Studies Council students, under the leadership of Courtney Schilling, worked hard on Voter Education and on the procedure itself. Students 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades voted on the candidates and the middle school through high school voted on both the candidates and issues. Fifth Grade teacher Marsha McQueen had students in her class register to vote and then sign in, comparing their signatures. Some brought school picture identification! Marsha's class also engaged in "Positive Protesting." They marched with VOTE signs on Monday before the election along 27 South in front of Marshall School. Jim Vajda, Talawanda network specialist, set up the ballot and used the system of Kids Voting "Double Click Democracy" to tabulate the results.

Kids Voting Talawanda is the newest affiliate in our region. Having been founded with Kids Voting of Southwest Ohio, then Kids Voting Dayton and last year Kids Voting Central Ohio, we were encouraged to form our own affiliate. With the assistance of the Talawanda School District, we managed to join Kids Voting, get information out to the teachers, and conduct a good 2011 fall election.

We still need to rework our status with the Oxford Community Foundation as we have a fund there that was established under one of the old affiliates. With Jim Robinson's assistance and guidance from Catherine Hollins of the Foundation, we will correct this. If you have any interest in becoming involved, please contact Prue Dana. We are in the process of forming a board which will support what the teachers and school system help us do for 2012!

To find the results of the kids voting, go to <http://oxford-members.oh.lwvnet.org/kids-voting.html>

Prue Dana, Kid's Voting



## **A Constitutional Amendment to Reform Ohio's Redistricting Process**

The U.S. Census Bureau performs a decennial (every ten years) census. Then, state governments redraw Congressional and State electoral districts. In September, 2011 Ohio's General Assembly passed, and Governor Kasich signed, House Bill 319. This bill reflects the will of the Republican majority in the General Assembly.

HB 319 gerrymanders Congressional and State districts so as to break apart communities of interest and make Ohio's elections uncompetitive. In response, members of a coalition including the League of Women Voters of Ohio, Ohio Citizen Action and Common Cause have drafted a constitutional amendment to reform Ohio's redistricting process.

### ***Highlights of the amendment:***

- Politicians will no longer be able to draw districts. Instead, an Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission, consisting of 12 qualified people, will determine our districts. Politicians, lobbyists, large campaign contributors, and other political insiders will not be permitted on the commission or choose who is.
- The Commission will be nonpartisan with four Republicans, four Democrats, and four voters not affiliated with either party.
- No more backroom deals! All commission meetings and records, including proposed plans will be public.
- Requires fair and objective redistricting practices. The commission will be required to adopt the plan which best meets the following criteria:
  - Creates compact districts
  - Minimizes splits of counties, townships, municipalities, and wards
  - Maximizes the number of politically balanced districts
  - Balances the number of districts which favor each political party

Next steps? Rep. Celeste would like to introduce the constitutional amendment, if he can do it in a bipartisan fashion. He knows it will be uphill sledding. However, those who put the amendment together believe that an initiative petition is the best scenario for the Legislature to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot.

Steve Dana, Government



## November 9: Elizabeth Cady Stanton Day in Oxford



Mayor Richard Keebler with LWVox members who organized the **Elizabeth Cady Stanton Day** event and prepared the exhibit. (l to r): Toni Saldivar, Mayor Keebler, Sallie Killian, Jo McQueen.

**The League of Women Voters of Oxford is commemorating Elizabeth Cady Stanton,** nineteenth-century founder of the movement to gain voting rights for women, with a display in the Oxford Lane Library. The exhibit is located on the second floor, near the entrance to the Smith Library of Regional History.

Oxford Mayor Richard Keebler opened the exhibit with his proclamation establishing November 9, 2011, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton Day in Oxford. That day marked the 141st anniversary of Stanton's lecture to the Miami University and Oxford communities in 1870. By then, Stanton, wife to the abolitionist Henry Brewster Stanton and mother of seven children, was famous. She had been working for more than thirty years for woman suffrage and she was lecturing in communities all across the country.

The League exhibit shows how Stanton was received in Oxford. Prominently displayed is Oxford artist Marjorie Bowers' watercolor of the house where Stanton stayed during her visit. It was the home of her brother-in-law, Robert L. Stanton, then president of Miami University. Built by him 1868 to graciously welcome students, faculty, and guests, this architectural gem still stands on the corner of Spring and Oak, opposite the McGuffey House Museum.

The centerpiece of the display is a framed copy of "Declaration of Sentiments," the 1848 document that Stanton wrote and read to the public at the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Based on the Declaration of Independence and signed by men as well as women at the convention, this document declares voting rights for women "inalienable rights." Susan B. Anthony joined Stanton in her work after the 1848 launch of the women's movement. Stanton, who died in 1902, did not live to see those rights made Constitutional with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

The League of Women Voters was formed that same year, 1920, to educate women to use their voting rights and to protect them from infringement. Today, the League is actively opposing infringement from unfair redistricting and from state laws that make voting harder for targeted populations.



The Mayor commended The League for its service to the community, especially in publishing Voter Information Guides as supplements to *The Oxford Press* before every election. A reception for more than twenty-five League members and friends followed in the Avis Cullen Meeting Room-B.

Toni Saldivar, Publicity



Joanne McQueen, Co-President of LWVOx, with artist Marjorie Bowers and her watercolor. The plaque reads: " The Stanton-McFarland-Bonham House, built in 1868 by Robert Stanton, President of Miami University, and where his sister-in-law Elizabeth Cady Stanton stayed, November 9, 1870." The LWVOx hopes the house can be preserved.

**At the reception following the Mayor's proclamation,** McGuffey Museum Curator, Stephen Gordon, and Miami University history professor Curt Ellison, discussed the historical and cultural significance of the house Robert Stanton built and where Elizabeth Cady Stanton stayed in 1870. Known today as The Bonham House and owned by Miami University, the future of this beautiful structure is uncertain. The League of Women Voters of Oxford hopes the exhibit will raise concern for the preservation of the "Stanton-McFarland-Bonham" House as an asset for Oxford and Miami University.

Toni Saldivar, Publicity