

Steve Dana. "The League Looks at Voting: Don't Take the Power of the Vote Lightly." *The Oxford Press*. 10 October 2014: A3.

Why vote? One starting point to an answer to this question is the form of government which is instituted in the United States. Although we frequently speak of our democracy, for the most part, our government functions as a republic. As such, ours is a government in which we elect representatives to make the laws by which we are governed.

But what about the initiative, referendum and recall? True, these are expressions of democracy in action, whereby voters, without the intermediation of representatives, decide the fate of a proposition or a representative. And there are issues on ballots, such as Issue No. 2 for City of Oxford residents this November, whose fate is determined by the votes we cast. Issue No. 2 asks voters to authorize the City to purchase electricity for residents by means of an aggregate, a bloc of city residents as buyers, which would lower costs and support clean energy.

How did this issue get on the November ballot? The City Council is a body of elected officials. They responded to a petition from the League of Women Voters of Oxford who had studied the possibilities of aggregation for a number of years and recommended it to the Council. The Council, as representatives of the City of Oxford voters who put them in office, acted in what they deemed the residents' best interests by putting the issue on the ballot for voters to accept or reject. This is our democracy--and our republic-- at work on the local level.

Most of our laws and statutes, however, are created by our elected representatives in legislative assemblies in state capitols and in Washington, DC.

Think of the vast array of decisions that are crafted and put to the vote in Columbus and in Washington by the people we vote into office. The taxes we pay, the roads and bridges we build, the safety of the food we eat, the wars in which America engages, the information that government collects about us, the very access we have to the voting booth--which days and times we can vote--all result from laws made by the people we elect or by the staff of agencies created by these representatives.

When we contemplate the enormous power invested in the people we elect, how can we not hold dear the right that we have and the responsibility we bear for what is often termed a "sacred right"?

Voting for an issue or for an individual running for office is a right best exercised by informed voters. The League of Women Voters of Oxford has recently prepared and distributed to our community the *Voters Information Guide* (VIG), a trusted, non-partisan resource for voters wanting to know about candidates seeking office this November. The VIG also contains information on ballot issue No. 2, which asks voters to accept or reject aggregation for the purpose of purchasing electricity for the residents of the City of Oxford.

To be informed voters on Issue No. 2, Oxford residents should know the following: Aggregation means buying electricity as a bloc with local government negotiating the contract. Not only can this process lower residents' electric bills, it can also protect the environment through purchasing from clean energy suppliers. This ballot issue offers a plan that would give residents a choice: a) to be part of the aggregate group for which the City Council negotiates lowers rates and cleaner energy; or b) to opt out and stay with their old plan or another plan they might choose as individuals. No one would be forced to join the aggregate buyers group or to change plans. Also, the means of delivery of electrical power--"the grid"-- to residents remains the same. Many municipalities in Ohio have voted for aggregation. Their residents have chosen to buy power as a bloc because this method is both cost effective and environmentally sound.

Let's spread the word about the power of the vote and let's be informed voters. Extra copies of the *Voters Information Guide* are in the Oxford Lane Library.