



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

January, 2018

To: Members of the LWVOxford

From: Sibyl Harris Miller, Co-President for Organization

We members of the League of Women Voters have many challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities ahead as 2018 unfolds. We are building on our successes of the past year, in which we educated voters, registered voters, provided in-depth community forums and discussions on civic issues of local, state, and national importance, and initiated the Fair Districts=Fair Elections campaign to end partisan gerrymandering in Congressional Districts in Ohio. Our Oxford League began leading this signature-gathering petition drive for all of Butler County, and we continue to be a leader in the region, as the campaign gains new urgency. Please read more about this initiative in the article in this edition of the Voter by our Fair Districts Coordinator, Jenny Fisher, who is a true powerhouse for eliminating gerrymandering.

Our League now has over 100 members, and many of us took part in the Second Annual Action Gathering we promoted and convened in Oxford on Friday, January 19. It was a time for energizing each other for the events of the following day, Saturday, January 20th---the Cincinnati Women's March, the Black Lives Matter:Cincinnati event, and the Dayton Women's March. About 80 people came through the Gathering, and at one point, during which we went around the room asking people to share their ideas and action plans, there were close to 60 people offering their comments, concerns, and hopes for our democracy. The energy was high, with details being handled by Jenny Fisher, Carole Katz, Kathy McMahon-Klosterman, and me. The evening demonstrated the fact that activism is very much alive in our community, and that the League is clearly a key leader in that movement!

At least 25 members of our Oxford League attended the January 20th marches and events, and our Fair Districts team staffed a table, gathering signatures AND registering voters. Jenny Fisher, Sandi Woy-Hazleton, and Sandy Drewes were a mighty team! With the LWVUS and the LWVOhio leading the way on so many important issues and supporting the local Leagues like ours, it is easier to move boldly in our activism to protect democracy! We are, indeed, part of a wide net of Leagues, expanding coalitions that will not let our freedoms, especially our voting rights and fair elections, be trifled with!

Upcoming opportunities for activism with your League include several events you should plan to attend. They are:

Annual Program Planning Meeting, Saturday, February 10, at which we will set our priorities for next year (July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019). The meeting starts at 10am and ends at 12:30pm in the Undercroft of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, East Walnut Street at South Poplar St.

Brown Bag Lunch Meeting, Thursday, February 22, "News Literacy" with MU Professor Patty Newberry, at noon at Patterson Place on Western Campus

Community Program, Wednesday March 14, "Oxford's Commitment to Climate Change," 7:30-9 pm, the Undercroft, Holy Trinity Church

Our Local Convention, Wednesday, April 25, 7:30-9pm, location to be announced.

You may also be interested in attending the Ohio Democratic Gubernatorial debate, 7 pm at Miami University Middletown, Thursday, February 15. Our Fair Districts team is asking for volunteers to collect signatures at the event. Just let us know if you are able to help.

Also, a potential program on the local opioids crisis is being explored for joint sponsorship with the League, possibly happening in late March or April. Stay tuned!

We are powerful together. We are well-informed together. We are determined together, to "Make Democracy Work"! We all know our mission, and we will not be deterred.



January Meeting on Education

On January 17, over 35 community members and Leaguers heard Kelly Spivey, Superintendent, Talawanda School District, and Dr. Mary Jane Roberts, current Talawanda School Board member, as they detailed the successes and challenges facing our local school system. Both noted how the District's achievements in "excellence" as previously measured were currently challenged by new requirements. Although they recognized and eagerly accepted the need to meet technological demands of an ever-changing environment, they also felt some state mandates have placed burdens on the system that are educationally unjustified. They stressed the need for the community to stay engaged, provide support for the Board, and understand current needs. One area of concern mentioned was the need for pre-school access for all children.



Program Planning: Be There to MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK... Saturday, February 10 10am-12:30pm Holy Trinity Undercroft

This year, Leagues are asked to share information on how our work will impact the *Campaign for Making Democracy Work*® as well as identify LWVUS positions that we intend to use in education and lobbying. The LWVUS recommends we continue this Campaign, working on:

Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Redistricting, and Campaign Finance Reform.

So we are focusing on the same topics, but at both the local and national levels.



Brown Bag Lunch: “NEWS LITERACY” with Dr. Patricia Newberry Thursday, February 22, Patterson Place Parlor, 12:00pm

Confused and overwhelmed by the 24/7 news cycle from multiple sources? Come and discuss how to better select, understand, and evaluate the news you receive with Dr. Patricia Newberry. Dr. Newberry is the Director and Senior Lecturer in the Journalism Program at Miami University. She has been working with Miami students as they provide the stories for PATCH, a digital source of local, state, and national news.



Good Government Takes Many Hands

Our mission to Make Democracy Work requires information and voter registration. And voting! The 2018 Government Services Directory is in the process of being printed. Sandy Drewes, Tracy Wilson, Carol Hennessey and Prue Dana have updated it. We received assistance from the Talawanda School Office and the City of Oxford.

As soon as the GSD are printed, they need to be folded and distributed. Can you help with this effort? Think of all of places you go in the day and **let Prue Dana know if you can take packets for distribution.**

pdana@woh.rr.com



Action Activities of League Members!

Congratulations to the LWV of Oxford for sponsoring a wonderfully successful **2nd Annual Action Meeting for Women** at La Rosa’s on Friday, January 19. Over 80 women, men, and children came by energize those who are writing postcards, sending letters and emails, and marching in support of voting rights, effective and vibrant democracy, and human dignity.

On Saturday, January 20, many of our members worked at a table to **register voters and get signatures on the petitions for the Fair Districts=Fair Elections campaign.**



A Battle Won in the War for Fair Districts

By Jenny Fisher

The past two weeks had Fair District volunteers scrambling; both across the state and here in Oxford. The Ohio Legislature threatened our movement to obtain real redistricting reform in Ohio and was met with considerable push back. While many were unable to keep up with the fast-breaking news this week and the countless details, I believe it's a good time to summarize the citizen's initiative and to understand how we got to this point in time.

The League has been working on redistricting reform in Ohio, in some form, since the 1970's. From 1978 through 2001, there was a proposed redistricting reform constitutional amendment introduced in each General Assembly session. They all failed. The League has been trying to work with our elected officials for years.

In 2014, Rep. Vern Sykes (D) and Rep. Matt Huffman (R) negotiated a compromise for redistricting the Ohio General Assembly which overwhelmingly passed both the Ohio House and the Senate. This compromise was later approved by the voters in November 2015 as Issue 1 which obtained 71.5% of the vote.

The morning after these election results came in, the League started to work on obtaining fair redistricting practices for U.S. Congressional districts. Although Issue 1 was a big success for Ohio, the legislature's proposal had purposely excluded U.S. Congressional districts per the request of then-Speaker of the House John Boehner.

The League, along with its partners, concluded that they could only obtain real reform through a citizen's initiative. Citizen initiatives are very labor intensive and very expensive. The amendment and ballot summary were approved by Ohio's ballot committee in May 2017.

In Oxford and in other cities across the state, we had volunteers eager to hit the streets and to obtain signatures for redistricting reform. The petitions could not be printed and distributed fast enough to keep up with demand. Through the past 8 months, Fair District volunteers across the state have kept a steady stream of signatures coming in.

The volunteers' successes have been making news across the state and they have been writing news articles themselves. Everywhere they go, they have worked to inform the public on why gerrymandering is unfair and how it could be improved. Gerrymandering has been in the National news cycle and Supreme Court cases dealing with gerrymandered congressional districts are being widely publicized

With the Fair District Fair Election Coalition getting a lot of coverage and publicity, the Ohio legislature made a big announcement in October 2017 that it would form a bipartisan Congressional Redistricting Working Group. Sen. Matt Huffman and Sen. Vern Sykes again were working together. In the fall, Fair District volunteers and the public attended two scoping meetings, made countless phone calls, and sent postcards. Their request was clear; take the elements of redistricting reform from the citizen initiative and place it on the ballot.

When Sen. Matt Huffman revealed his redistricting proposal to the public in early January, it set off a fire storm of rage. It was clear that his proposal, thinly-veiled as reform, was meant to confuse the public and entrench gerrymandering into the Ohio constitution. During his presentation, Huffman described his schedule as quickly passing through the Government Oversight and Reform committee, quickly passed by the Ohio Senate, and then passed by the Ohio House. This would place his proposal on the primary ballot in May; ahead of the Fair District Fair Election citizen initiative. Primary elections also normally have a lower voter turnout.

After the meeting (which he boycotted), Sen. Vern Sykes spoke out against the proposal. Although he had been a member of the bipartisan committee, he and his fellow Democrat had been kept away from Huffman's work and had been unable to contribute. The gerrymandering being proposed by Huffman ensured that communities in rural Ohio would be kept together while allowing urban areas to be split. Instead of ensuring that the proposed U.S. congressional district map received bipartisan support prior to approval, he devised an elaborate ruse of shifting map-making responsibilities around if "bipartisan support" was not obtained. Huffman's proposal favored his own political party; the GOP.

The news of Huffman's deception flew through the internet. Between the size of the Fair Districts community, the publicity received in the past year, and the sheer anger of Ohio citizens at corruption in government, his proposal was not well received.

The League and Fair Districts both sent out Action Alerts asking for help and the community responded with phones ringing. A number of volunteers showed up to the Ohio Senate's Government Oversight and Reform committee meetings to speak or to be a physical presence while others submitted written testimony. Encouraged by these Action Alerts and each other, we had four people from Oxford submit written testimony in opposition to Huffman's proposal.

As the Fair District volunteers were gearing up for the Ohio Senate committee meeting, news arrived that the Ohio House would be having meetings (that same week) to discuss redistricting reform. This was for a new reform, a different reform from Huffman's or the citizen initiative. A scramble ensued and a day later that meeting had been stricken from the schedule.

Amidst the push-back, the committee did not vote on Huffman's proposal. Sen. Huffman delayed the vote until he has gotten bipartisan support. He is working with the Fair District Fair Election Coalition now and the Senate president made a public statement that they wouldn't vote on a proposal until Fair Districts accepted it.

This has been a long, hard fight for Fair Districts in Ohio, but we won an important battle this week.



League Members Attend Women's March

By Jenny Fisher

Joined by an estimated 10,000 fellow marchers, League members marched through downtown Cincinnati for women's rights and in support of the organizers' message of voting. Their rally cry of "Hear Our Vote" and "Power to the Polls" encouraged women to actively participate in our democracy through speaking out, voting, and running for office.

Sandy Drewes worked the Voter Registration table and registered approximately 30 women!

Jenny Fisher and Sandi Woy-Hazleton (cheerfully dressed in her pink hat) worked the Fair Districts tables. Many of the marchers approached the table and asked to sign the petition. Many of them already knew about gerrymandering and were eager to end it.

Having correctly anticipated the size of the crowd, we had numerous League members circulating through the crowds with the Fair District petitions and clipboards. A special thanks to Carole Katz, Kathleen Knight-Abowitz, Libby Earle and her husband, Russ, for volunteering for this task. Fair Districts had many other volunteers working the crowd, including support from the LWV-Cincinnati Area and LWV-Clermont.

Sibyl and Bill Miller arrived at the event just as the weather was warming up to a delightful 50 degrees. Kate Rousmaniere and Michelle Boone were also there to march and mingle with the crowds.

In a related note, the LWV-Dayton described the Dayton Women's March as a "Fair Districts Bonanza."





Meet New LWVOx Members DON and MARLA MURRAY

By Toni Saldivar

Don and Marla Murray came to Oxford in the summer of 2014 with their two sons, Ethan and Logan. Don taught naval science at the MU NROTC program for three years and then retired from the Navy in 2017. This move was a careful choice for Don and Marla, who had met at the University of Oklahoma when both were undergraduates. Miami University would be their fourteenth and final move with the military. They knew Don would retire at the end of this tour to start a second phase of life and wanted their



family to settle in a good community with good schools for their sons. As a naval officer, Don had traveled the world with assignments on all kinds of warships. He was based in Japan, Korea, Singapore, Hawaii, Italy and on US Naval bases from Florida to Washington state. Marla and the boys traveled the world with him. While stationed in Naples, Italy, they learned from friends there about Oxford, Ohio, and Talawanda schools. That started the ball rolling in favor of Miami University as Don's last naval assignment.

Don is now a PhD student at Miami's Department of Educational Leadership. Marla is a special education teacher at the New Miami elementary school. Special needs children have been Marla's calling since she began her studies in education. She, like her husband, cares deeply about our country. Living in many places in the world, she noted, gives one a heightened awareness of the importance of our ability as citizens and voters to make a difference. During their years as a Navy family, Marla and Don voted in US elections by absentee ballots wherever they were stationed, and they relied on League of Women Voter Guides for non-partisan information. Being civilians in a politically active community is a new experience that they welcome. When asked if they are optimistic about the future of our democracy today, they were cautiously optimistic. Don is concerned about the "hollowing out" of our democratic institutions by leaders who do not see the dangers in that. For example, he sees the State Department's loss of career professionals as a potential threat to global stability. He is glad, however, to see our constitutional system of checks and balances working, and he hopes we demand more transparency in government aided by a fair and free press. Marla is heartened by the surge in voter activism. "We know now," she said, "what we don't want."

What Marla and Don do want is to support education and, in particular, civic education that makes possible a democratic society of informed voters.

The League of Women Voters of Oxford welcomes new members **Don and Marla Murray**.



HELP WANTED

Poll Workers Needed For the May 8th Primary Election

The Butler County Board of Elections is looking for Poll Workers for the May 8th Primary Election. Poll workers serve their community by helping friends and neighbors cast their votes. They also earn extra spending money!

- ✓ **Make a minimum of \$174**
- ✓ **Learn more about our election and voting process**
- ✓ **Add a new experience to your resume**
- ✓ **Serve your country on the front lines of democracy!**

To be a poll worker, you must be a citizen of the United States, 18 or over and fluent in English. You will attend training, participate in a one hour meeting on the eve of the election, and work all day on Election Day. Your assigned location will be within 15 minutes of your home.

**Anyone interested in working can sign-up at
www.butlercountyelections.org**

or call

(513) 785-5711 today!

