



Oklahoma Voter

League of Women
Voters of Oklahoma

November 2005

President's Message...

Dear League Members,

I would like to invite each of you to attend our 2006 Effective Advocacy Seminar, January 18, 2006, at the State Capitol. Marjorie Swofford, Dolores Martin, and Jean Warner have worked hard to develop an outstanding event with informative workshops and knowledgeable speakers. Thank you ladies for another outstanding job! We are in need of 15 league members to serve as facilitators and pages for the workshops. As an incentive, the registration fee for those assisting will be \$10 instead of \$45 (pre-registered) or \$60 (on-site registration). If you are wanting to help, please call or email me at 580-436-0763 (home), 580-272-4378 (cell), or jorbwilson@cableone.net. A registration form for the Effective Advocacy Seminar is included in this issue.

Another event that will be coming up soon is the Women's Legislative Day, March 15, 2006, sponsored by the Legislative Coalition. In the past, the LWVOK has been a member with other women's organizations to present training, workshops, and to lobby on issues important to women. This event has always been educational and has provided an opportunity for meeting your representatives. More information will be provided to local league presidents and on our website as it becomes available.

This issue of our newsletter is filled with many instructive articles for you to enjoy. Karen Melcher has written two articles about the UN Association Banquet and on the topic of IDs for voting. Cheri Spears included a summary of the state board meeting held on November 2, 2005. Mary Tinker reported on the First Oklahoma Conference on Successful Prisoner Reentry held on November 19th, 2005 in Oklahoma City. Dortha Dunlap wrote an update on our statewide study on re-entry of women after incarceration. Thank you ladies for making this a special issue. The back page of our Voter has a contribution form for our annual fundraising drive. All contributions, large or small, assist in supporting the League and are greatly appreciated.

Twenty-two counties have an election on December 13th concerning upgrades of their 9-1-1 systems. Vivian Schmidt wrote an education article about this issue for the Bartlesville newsletter. I am hoping her article will be posted on the LWVOK website. Sunny Choi has done an outstanding job creating and developing our website, so please visit us there. She is also willing to assist any local leagues in developing their websites.

This coming year should be a busy one for league members with so many state and local races being decided. Voter service chairs will need all the assistance they can obtain. Our statewide study will also be important this year. Dortha Dunlap and her study committee will be preparing materials to send to local leagues later in the year. Thanks to every league that participated in the survey. The Department of Corrections has asked the LWV to conduct public meetings about re-entry issues in communities with local leagues. This would be an excellent opportunity to make contacts at DOC that would be helpful for our statewide study.

Thank each of you for being league members and for your service to your community, state, and nation. I wish all of you a Merry Christmas, and I hope your New Year will be joyful and fulfilling.

Barbara Wilson

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UN Association Banquet

By Karen Melcher

The UN Association of Eastern Oklahoma celebrated the 60th anniversary of the founding of the UN with a banquet and talk by Gillian Sorenson from the UN Foundation. Sorenson has worked for Boutros Boutros Gali and Kofi Annan in the Security Council.

As a strong believer in the importance of the United Nations she wants all Americans to realize the importance of the United States supporting the United Nations. She describes the UN as an imperfect and indispensable organization. One of her main points was that despite being the strongest military and economic power, the United States must not have the arrogance to ignore other countries' wishes. These countries can unite and turn their backs on the US causing the US to lose the power to influence world events and to suffer as a consequence.

Sorenson urged everyone to write to their Senators stating support for UN treaties not ratified by the US Congress. She mentioned CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women), the treaty to outlaw landmines, and the Kyoto Protocol among others. Another of her concerns was that The United States has failed to pay any money to the UN Population Fund recently. Without this funding many third world women are denied any prenatal care. Sorenson said that she realized that Oklahoma's Senators were two of the least supportive of the UN, but said it was necessary that they know that their constituents did support the UN, its programs, and its treaties.

More than 20 students from Booker T. Washington High School, Oral Roberts University, and the University of Tulsa attended the banquet. Rosie Brown, former LWVOK president and Sorenson's escort for her Tulsa stay, had visited these schools with Sorenson and was very impressed by the students' interest and excellent questions on international affairs.

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Hello,

I am Jacqueline Achong, the Second Vice-President on the League of Women Voters Oklahoma Board. One of my responsibilities is membership. Membership is vital to the local leagues, as well as recruitment and retention. LWVUS states that recruitment must be an ongoing activity. Effective recruitment depends on knowing your community and identifying their concerns. We must also find creative ways to get the word out about the League using existing community outreach activities.

I will be mailing a packet to each Local League Membership Chair.

This packet will include:

- Evaluation Assessment Tool for Membership
- Recruitment Sample Letter
- 100 Great Ideas for Member Recruitment

You will also receive other important information on membership.

You can contact me by telephone at 580.248.0000.146 between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm or email: jacqueline.achong@oesc.state.ok.us, anytime. Thanks.

Enjoy your Special Holidays!

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Picture IDs Necessary for Voting?

By Karen Melcher

Will picture IDs be required at the polls in Oklahoma? If the ID requirement is to be voted on by the OK Legislature, should the LWVOK oppose or support the requirement? As Voter Service Chair for LWVOK I became concerned when it was reported that legislation has been proposed in Oklahoma to make voters present a government issued picture IDs in order to vote. I contacted LWVUS to see if LWV had any consensus on picture IDs for voters. Jeanette Senecal of the LWVUS staff said that LWV has no blanket statement on photo IDs. Each case has to be evaluated individually. She sent information on two cases where the LWV had made a statement against the ID requirement.

Kay Maxwell, President LWVUS wrote to the NY Times opposing the ID requirement advocated by the Commission on Federal Election Reform. Her letter can be viewed at www.lwvok.org.

The LWV of Georgia has opposed the new law in Georgia. The Georgia law forces citizens to pay \$20 for the documentation needed to vote. Since this \$20 fee seems like a return to the now unconstitutional poll tax, the LWV Georgia along with other groups sued. Federal Judge Harold Murphy, citing the 24th amendment to the US Constitution, has enjoined the state from enforcing the law. The League and other groups are hoping there will be no appeal. More information on the LWV Georgia's stand can be found at www.lwvok.org.

In addition to the fact the any charge for a photo ID would be a return to the poll tax, several other concerns on the use of photo IDs have been brought forward. Those without a photo ID or driver's licenses tend to be elderly, disabled or poor and are disproportionately members of minorities. An editorial from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* cites the following statistics.

- A study from the Task Force on the Federal Election System showed that from 6 to 10 percent of the electorate lacks any form of state ID.
- According to the AARP's Georgia chapter, about 36 percent of Georgians over age 75 have no driver's license.
- In 1994 a Justice Department study found that blacks in Louisiana were four to five times less likely than whites to have photo IDs.
- In 2004 South Dakota voters in predominately Native American counties were two to eight times more likely to fail to bring ID to the polls that other voters were.

These groups without an ID are the groups who would have the most difficult time getting to a site to obtain a photo ID. Some states with a photo ID requirement do not charge a fee and do provide a "back-up" plan for voters without a photo ID.

The LWV OK will have to look carefully at any proposed ID requirements and make sure these measures do not disenfranchise large numbers of voters.

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OKLAHOMA 2006 EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY SEMINAR

January 18, 2006
State Capitol
Oklahoma City

Dear League Members,

Please join us for our Effective Advocacy Seminar this January. Our workshops this year include:

Tips on Lobbying Your Legislator
Lobbying Through the Internet
How Appointments Get Made
Overview of the Legislative Process
Education
Environment and Water
Aging, Health and Mental Health
Reentry Issues for Women
Children and Early Childhood Development

REGISTRATION FORM for League Members

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Email _____ Local League _____

Registration Fee: \$45 pre-registered (includes refreshments, lunch, ending reception, and packet)

On-Site Registration: \$60 (includes refreshments, lunch, ending reception, and packet as long as supplies last). (Lunch cannot be guaranteed for participants registering the day of the workshops, although we will have some extras).

Please make checks payable to:

LWVOK
500 N. Broadway, Suite 125
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102.

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LWVOK Board Meeting

By Cheri Spears

The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Oklahoma met Saturday, November 5, 2005 in the office of the Metro-Tulsa League. There was a lot of subject matter to cover for the day.

As part of her treasurer's report Sherre James said she has notified the owners of the rented copier that we will not continue to rent after December 10 when our contract runs out. She sent a flier around about the copier Staples recommended we buy. This should reduce that expense quite a lot. Sherre also reported she had changed the phone service.

Jacqueline Achong reported that she is using the membership tool kit from LWVUS. She is working to gather all the changed addresses and is willing to do all she can to help leagues that are not currently very active get back into action.

Since we are being encouraged to carry material to have handy for promoting the League there was some discussion about how to have material available and keep it from being battered and torn by the time we have the opportunity to hand it out. Sunny Choi had made a sample of a business card with League information, including the LWV web address. Barbara Wilson suggested we have some available to all our members; they could easily be protected in different containers or protectors. Sunny Choi and Jacqueline Achong will work out a design of some sort.

Dortha Dunlap presented material from her visit to the organizational meeting for the Alliance for Oklahoma's Future. There was much discussion about whether their goals and principles toward tax and budget issues and provision of public services are in line with the Leagues. Dortha proposes LWVOK join the Alliance. The dues are rated according to income. According to the chart our dues would be \$100 to \$250. Sherre James pointed out that we have \$150 available in the budget for this type of expense. The board voted that we join the Alliance with up to \$150.00 from the LWVOK treasury, with board membership contributing further if more than \$150.00 is required.

The support of the League of Women Voters of Oklahoma is based on the League of Women Voters of the United States principle that "responsible democratic government should be responsible to the will of the people, maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, and share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare." Whoever goes to the first meeting must point out and state our coalition guidelines.

Dortha also reported that almost the same time the Alliance for Oklahoma's Future met, news from the Tax-payers Bill of Rights began to appear everywhere. The board voted that LWVOK oppose TABOR.

Dortha also reported that she has already received the Re-Entry for Women survey results from Norman and expects to receive results from other local Leagues shortly. Sherre James asked if there is a way that MAL's can participate. Dortha will call them personally to see if they would like to do some of the research in their communities.

Nancy Dodson informed the board of several resources to gather information and reports. She showed a brief report made on September 1, 2005 on the numbers of women imprisoned in Oklahoma, which communities they were from, how many were violent crimes and how many were not violent crimes. One very good website is www.reentrypolicy.org. A great resource list is from Operation Hope in Tulsa. Perhaps each community can create a bluebook, a list of services in your community.

Barbara Wilson said she and Mary Smith of Department of Corrections are still trying to get together. Mary now understands that we will not be able to gather 200 or more people for a program in all our communities.

Nancy Dodson also announced the November 19 Re-entry Conference in Oklahoma City. It will be from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Members of the local leagues working on the study are encouraged to attend. Cost is \$25.00.

Marjorie Swafford reported that plans are well on the way for the Advocacy workshop at the state capital on Wednesday January 18th. Volunteers will be needed to man the various events. Check in will begin at 8:30 a.m. There will be morning workshops and afternoon workshops, breakfasts and box lunches will be available.

Marjorie asked for volunteers to update phone numbers and web addresses. Judi Johnson will help Delores Martin with the phone numbers and Dortha Dunlap will check out the web addresses.

Karen Melcher reported that several states had been in the news because of the states trying to require picture IDs for voting if people did not have a driver's license. Georgia was trying to charge voters \$20 for the IDs. So far, they have been able to avoid that requirement on the grounds of discrimination against many groups.

Other news was about redistricting problems, also in other states at this time, and the need to have a nonpartisan group to do the redistricting.

There was also the reminder that several communities in the state will be having an election on December 13. There should be some announcement on the website that these communities will be having these elections even though it is not a statewide election.

Sunny Choi had brought samples of the Voters Choice tea to be considered for the fundraising effort. If we order 37 boxes we can make \$1 profit per box. There are 4 varieties. She will have to go back to the website to see if each local league should order or if Barbara Wilson should order and distribute to the local Leagues.

Barbara Wilson will update the strategic plan. The deadline is January 2, 2006. She would much appreciate help reviewing the plan and the update. Polly Bowen is qualified to lead us in the process of making a strategic plan before it will be due again.

Sunny Choi said the Stillwater League has given their files to Oklahoma State University to be archived. Sherre James said that Oklahoma Historical Society is archiving the League of Women Voters of Oklahoma files.

Sunny Choi announced she would be happy to help local leagues set up their own websites.

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Report on the First Oklahoma Conference on Successful Prisoner Reentry November 19th, 2005, held in Oklahoma City By: Mary Tinker

Several Leaguers were able to attend this meeting: Nancy Dodson, Tulsa, Dottie Goss, Stillwater and Mary Tinker, Bartlesville.

This meeting was co sponsored by several state agencies: the Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, the Department of Corrections and the Dept. of Career and Technology Education and by 9 faith based organizations which have active prison ministries. Agency commissioners and directors from DOC, DMH, DHS. and Department of Labor spoke. Several presenters explained research that convincingly links spiritual recovery with success in staying out of prison and rebuilding lives.

A number of things were striking. There is a new DOC director, Justin Jones, who is determined to take advantage of research-based techniques to improve potential for treatment within the prisons. At the same time he plans to connect better pay and training for staff with better outcomes for everyone. Commissioner Terry Cline of the Department of Mental Health said, "Good and powerful changes are taking place". He promised that by the end of the year there would be funding for 3,000 drug and alcohol abuse treatment beds and that DMH is partnering with DOC to treat violent offenders prior to release. In addition DMH is working with DHS to certify Medicaid eligible inmates prior to release so that medical needs can be met as soon as they are released.

Howard Hendricks, Director of DHS, reminded the assembly that poverty is increasing and said that 58% of births in Oklahoma last year were paid by Medicaid with 36% of Oklahoma children currently Medicaid recipients. He has not increased staff numbers in several years while workloads have tripled but praised the efforts of staff. He had several proposals for more cooperative interagency work. A single application, which can be completed by computer, is in the works. It can pre certify eligibility for various forms of aid before someone waits in a long line only to find out they are in the wrong office or agency. It can remain available on line to any state agency so that repetitive application submission is eliminated. Also adoptions of foster children have dramatically increased due to the efforts of staff to make permanent homes for deprived children a priority.

Norma Noble, Deputy Secretary of Labor reported on a new certification of employment readiness, more specific than the G.E.D. The document could be attained in prison as well as in community colleges; it would signify that a person has mathematical and reading skills, computer skills and other specific work readiness training. It will be a national "workplace credential" designed and validated by the same company that makes and administers the ACT college entrance exam. This should help employers sort candidates. She also noted that we have a developing worker shortage and that released prisoners with such a certificate might be more likely to get jobs than in the past.

These very positive reports from state government were followed by the faith based speakers. The presenters were of uniformly high quality with national reputations. Together they brought many decades of research and practice to bear upon the problem. It is difficult for members of our organization to come to consensus regarding how to treat the question of religious influence in government. Leaguers struggle with questions of constitutionality and non-artisanship too difficult to treat in this report. Leaving that for another day I would like to report that these were very impressive, inspiring and effective individuals. I count it a privilege to have been there. Biographies are available upon request as we have space constraints here. Briefly, consider these things:

Emmett Solomon, Baptist minister, Restorative Justice Ministries Network said,

- " Faith based organizations have always brought the greatest number of helpers to the prison gates
- Things that work to change human behavior always involve relationships.
- Strong citizen voices from the faith community can give lawmakers permission to do the right thing.
- Influencing an individual to change involves love and guidance, nurture and discipline. Prisons are managed in an adversarial style through necessity and then this is lived out. Prisons do provide guidance and discipline. Love and nurture are not the job of the corrections dept. but are someone's job if there is going to be a change of heart.
- Prisons can be seen as a mission field as 60% of prisoners are unchurched. But call them to their faith, not yours."

Thomas O'Connor, Ph.D., Oregon DOC, Former Carmelite friar, said,

- The integration of religion and effective criminal justice intervention requires an essential understanding of what we are trying to do and what historical and philosophical framework we bring to bear.
- Research demonstrates that criminal values, attitudes and beliefs and a lack of pro social models (continued on page 7)

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(continued from page 6) are the greatest influences on whether an individual breaks the law. Those coming from the religious community have centuries of practice in reaching and changing the human heart. They are also statistically more likely to vote, be employed, have strong family ties, and lead stable lives. Their example and support is invaluable.

- Make no mistake that religion is not meaningful in the life of prisoners. They may attend religious programming initially for external or extrinsic benefits:
- The meetings are safe places in the prison
- There are material comforts such as cookies and punch
- There is access to outsiders, which is diverting and relieves boredom
- They may be able to see inmate friends from other parts of the prison
- But if they come to such groups regularly there is often a change to internal or intrinsic motivation.
- They deal with issues of guilt and responsibility.
- They begin to envision and actively seek a new way of life.
- They can find comfort in dealing with the losses in their life of family, freedom, trust etc.

The Dept. of Corrections is willing to provide training and give more information to interested groups. There was a great deal more, all of it worth reporting. Perhaps as our reintegration of women material is summarized we can deal with other relevant information.

STATE STUDY--RE-ENTRY SERVICES FOR FEMALE FORMER FELONS

by Dortha Dunlap

The state study on the re-entry of women former felons into the community is coming along. Some of you have been doing interviews with local organizations which provide assistance to these women locally. Some questionnaires from around the state have already been coming in. I would like to thank everyone who is doing these interviews. I would also like to suggest that many of you might find it interesting to report to your local league, either Voter or a meeting, what services you found available in your community. The state study will prepare material, based on the questionnaire results, dealing with state-wide services and needs, including possible solutions, so such a report is not a replacement for the state study, but we all know that everyone is most inspired by needs that they actually see or that are really close to home. I have not set a date yet, but I plan to have a meeting late in January with as many local chairs of the study as are available. The meeting will be as centralized as possible so that no one has to drive outrageously far.

\$\$ Save Expense on State Voter \$\$ Get Your Voter On Line

In an effort to improve the financial condition of the State League, we are attempting to reduce the cost of producing and sending the State VOTER. It costs almost \$300 to print and mail the State VOTER to every League member - that's almost \$.50 per copy! The State VOTER will be available on the League's website. If you have access to the internet, please help the State League reduce our costs. Let your representative on the State Board know that you are willing to read your VOTER online instead of getting a paper copy in the mail (and save a few trees too!)
Thank you for your help!"

The League of Women Voters Oklahoma has chosen to sell the Voters' Choice Teas from the Strand Tea Company for their fund raising project. The teas come in four flavors: Eleanor's Breakfast Tea, a pure Ceylon with a hint of Bergamot and Jasmine; Citizen Grey, a special Earl Grey blend; Vanilla Rooibos (Afrikaans for 'red bush'; pronounced 'ROY-BOSS'), an organic, herbal and decaffeinated tea; and Grassroots Green, an organic green tea. The selling price is \$3.50 for a box of 18 bags. If you or your League can order 37 or more boxes, it will create more profit (\$1 per box) for the LWVOK. Voters' Choice Tea makes a great gift for family, friends, and supporters of the League!

To Order visit Strand Tea on the web at www.strandtea.com or call 1-888-718-6358. Don't forget to mention that your order is for a League. They do sell other kinds of tea, but these are especially for League fund raisers. Check with members of your local state board member to see if someone has already ordered tea in your local league area.



**League of Women
Voters of Oklahoma**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Email: lwvokla@aol.com

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Nonprofit Organization
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Permit #879

Oklahoma City, OK

We're On The Web!
<http://lwvok.org>

Yes, I want to keep the League's voice for good government strong!

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- Please use my contribution for the General Operating Fund. (Make check payable to LWVOK.)
- Please use my contribution for the Citizens' Education Fund.* (Make check payable to LWVOK CEF.)
- Please deposit my contribution into the Endowment Fund.* (Make check payable to LWVOK Endowment Fund.)
- Please begin my Pillar.* (Make check payable to LWVOK Endowment Fund.)

**Your contribution is tax deductible.*

Please mail to LWVOK, 500 N. Broadway, Suite 125, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102.