



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS - RoMaFH
ROSEVILLE, MAPLEWOOD, FALCON HEIGHTS

Also serving the communities of Little Canada and Lauderdale

VOTER

April 2007

www.romafh.org

In this issue...

- Page 1 **Unit Meetings**
- Page 2 **Co-President's Letter**
- Page 3 **April Meeting Follow-up**
- Page 4 **Windows & Mirrors Upcoming Events**
- Page 5 **Book Sale**
- Page 6 **Treasurer's Report State Study on Immigration**

April Unit Meetings Matters of Diversity

What are your current views on diversity? The RoMaFH diversity/outreach working group will host the April unit meeting and we hope to engage you in the last two years of our activities and discussions.

The presentation will be diverse in its offerings. You will get a chance to answer questions from the U.S. citizenship test. And prizes will be awarded for the best score on the test! For instance, how much do you really know about Benjamin Franklin?

We will discuss the current national league immigration study and present a legislative update. You will also get a chance to see the great video that we made on voting made easy.

This will be an interesting meeting. Come and join the discussion. Help us pick a new aspect of diversity to explore in the coming months and year.

Welcome new members:

Craig Klausing
447 Rose Place
Roseville, MN 55113

Kelly Wolfe
1508 Fifth St. Suite 2300
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612-335-1535
kellywolfe@leonard.com

Tuesday, April 17, 5:30P.M. Timberlodge Steak House
Contact Stephanie DeBenedet, 651-483-1006
or jdebenedet@msn.com

Wednesday April 18, 9:30A.M. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Victoria and County Rd. C
Contact Norma Signorelli at 651 645 8425

2006-7 Board of Directors

Teri Kysylyczyn
Barbara Yates
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Andrea Brodtmann
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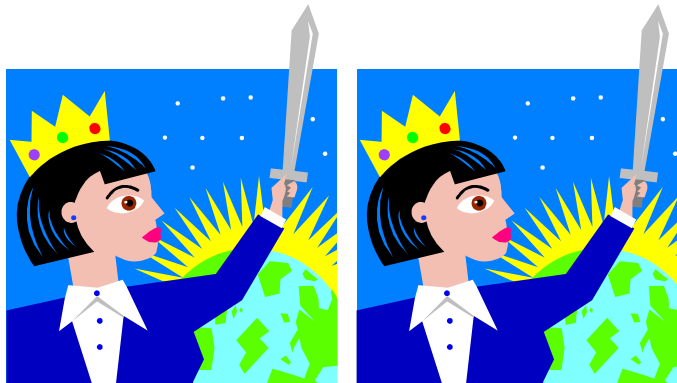
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Patricia DeFrancis
Sandi Lutz, Linda McLoon
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Karen Schaffer
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Membership

Georgiana Sobola
Units/ Admin. Asst

Laura French, Diane Nystrom
Newsletter

Joan Stark
Betty Harper
Finance Committee



Co-Presidents' Letter

Last year when we were planning the programs for this year, the top vote getter for more programming was diversity. Our members are clearly excited and challenged about what we can do to make our changing communities more welcoming and our organization more inclusive. Diversity and Immigration are the topics that will be discussed at our April Unit meetings (more details elsewhere in this newsletter). Please take advantage of this opportunity to continue or discussions and learnings on this important topic.

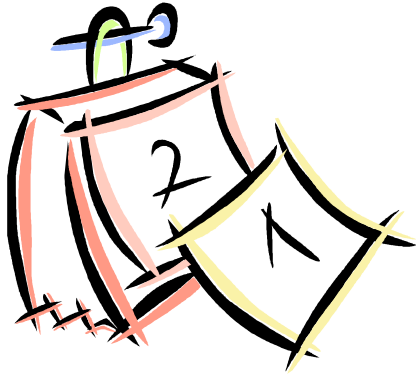
One thing we know about leaguers is that they are voracious readers! This is a "twofer" for members at our upcoming book sale: 1. clear out the old books by donating them to the sale and 2. Fill up the newly vacant space on your book shelves with books you can purchase at the sale. Repeat this behavior for every future league book sale!

The biennial League of Women Voters – Minnesota convention will be held on May 18 and 19 at Breezy Point Resort. Our league has 6 delegates. Resources are available to cover travel and hotel expenses of our delegates. Please let Barb Yates know if you would like to be a delegate, or if you would like more information to help you decide (651-633-3516 or bjyates29@aol.com). The state convention is always a good time and a great learning experience, whether you have been a member for a long time, or are just starting to get involved. Only a few slots are left, so act soon.

Finally, we want to make a special invitation for you to attend our annual meeting on May 8, 2007. This is always a fun, lively meeting with great food. Please join us if you can.

Teri Kysylyczyn & Barb Yates

Co-presidents



Calendar of Events 2007

April 29 Book Sale
Apr 17-18 Unit Meetings
“Diversity/
Immigration”
Apr 25 Board Meeting
May 8 Annual Meeting
May 23 Board Meeting
June 25 Rosefest Parade
June 27 Board Calendar
Planning Meeting

April Meeting Follow-UP:

State Study of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

This summary of the discussion of the two April Unit meetings was submitted to the State League by Ann Berry:

1. What were the most important aspects/findings of the study for our local league?

A: How politicized the agency has become. It seems to have lost sight of its original mission, and has been taken over by the people and organizations they regulate.

2. Would we like further investigation of some facet of the study?

A: We should focus and follow up on what we have and possibly look at a specific subject or project (ex. Ethanol?)

3. Is there any particular direction we'd like to recommend? If so, do current positions allow us to take action? Do we need further consensus?

A: We do not need further consensus. We need LWV Observer/Action presence at Citizen Board meetings and to lobby for changes proposed in current legislation addressing structure of the agency.

4. If we believe the LWV can act on the basis of current positions, what is our priority for legislative or administrative action? (some examples of areas for action: on organization of the agency, on funding, on agency responsibilities with regard to specific issues or public health in general)??

A: We believe that the commissioner//director should not be chair and voting member of the Citizen Board, that the seats there, and the voting membership should include representatives of environmental organizations as well as businesses to which the agency provides permits. And further believe that the agency should return to its original clear mission of protecting the environment and the health of the general population when examining requests for permits from any organization, business or group of citizens.

5. Would we like to see study of another state agency using this study as a template?

A: Not at this time!



Windows and Mirrors for All

By Florence Sprague

Upcoming Events:

April 19: Legacy Luncheon celebrating publication of the 5th edition of INDIANS IN MINNESOTA Call LWVMN 651-224-5445 for information, or go to info@lwvmn.org

April 29: Our own BOOK SALE (see article in this VOTER)

May 2: Northwest Youth and Family Services Annual Luncheon at Midland Hills Country Club, speaker- Cindy Leshner

For information, call Ann Berry, 651-484-4502

MAY 8, 5:30PM ANNUAL MEETING- Falcon Heights City Hall
Invitation is in the mail!

May 18-19: LWVMN Convention, Breezy Point, Brainard, MN
For information, call Presidents Barb Yates, 651-633-3516
Or Tery Kysylyczyn, 651-484-

What Does It Mean To Be American?

By Florence Sprague

What does it mean to be American? Before you read any further, jot down a few thoughts on this question. Now, pull up a mental image of “an American.” These are two sides of the same coin.

So, what did you identify? Who did you see? Is it someone born here? Someone who speaks English? Someone white? Did you identify beliefs? Lifestyle? Privilege? Economics? Insular worldview? Race? Language? Education? Random good fortune? Attitude? Citizenship? Is it important to be able to answer certain questions? Does religion matter? There are those who might argue for almost any of these...and which you find tugging at your gut may be enlightening.

I have always felt very lucky to be American. As a youth traveling in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, this feeling of good fortune was enhanced by exposure to the restrictions on my Soviet acquaintances. I soon came to see that wherever you went, people were more interested in the mundane questions of everyday life- can I buy a chicken for dinner or new shoes for my child?- than in politics, *per se*, but their options were not the same. I rather naively believed that the words of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence were the reality of my country. Neither our government nor our citizenry is as ideal as our foundations, and it is in those foundations that we are incredibly lucky. The Founders, though themselves fallible and imperfect human beings, created a wonderful structure, which succeeding generations have been refining to combat the persistent imperfections of human beings.

To me as a traveling youth the essence of being American took two forms. On the political side it meant being able to live in the freest country in the world. On the practical side it meant being lucky enough to benefit from unparalleled economic prosperity. I didn't think about the fact that even within my own country not everyone benefited equally from the laws, or that over and over we had had to struggle to live up to our ideals, or that our economic prosperity was derived too often from inequitable (or worse) business practices around the world which contributed to the economic disadvantages of others, both at home and abroad. OK, so I was really naïve. I probably still tend to be naïve, and my personal status as an educated, economically secure, white woman allows me to be so.

Why am I discussing this in a diversity column, you ask? Well, I think that the questions of what it means to be American, and who is a “real” American are plaguing this country at this time. They are central to the race divide, the conflict over immigration, the role of religion in policy and community, what language(s) is(are) accepted and many other places.

► I recently began reading Race Matters by Cornel West and I wasn't even out of the introduction before I came face to face with the assertion that, liberal or conservative, white Americans see black Americans as “other” and as a problem to be solved.

“...for liberals, black people are to be ‘included’ and ‘integrated’ into ‘our’ society and culture, while for

June 25: ROSEFEST PARADE
Be ready to VOLUNTEER

For information, call Marty
Everest, 651-646-8026

conservatives they are to be ‘well behaved’ and ‘worthy of acceptance’ by ‘our’ way of life. Both fail to see that the presence and predicaments of black people are neither additions to nor defections from American life, but rather *constitutive elements of that life.*” (p.6)

West firmly states that serious discussion of race in America must begin with the shortcomings and flaws of American society, not with the problems of black people. We should not be surprised that blacks rebel against expectations to “fit in.” Their families have been in the North America longer than many white Americans. It is wrong that they cannot feel accepted as an integral part of American society.

LWVRoMaFH 2007 FINANCE DRIVE UPDATE

As we reach the mid-point of our 2007 Finance Drive, LWV members and friends of LWV are responding generously. To make a contribution, along with your check please enclose the form designating your gift to the Tax Deductible *Education Fund* or to Non-Deductible *General Operating Expenses*. For additional information please contact Betty Harper or Joan Stark.

► When at a celebration of International Women’s Day hosted by SWIM(Somali Women of Minneapolis), I heard myself saying that too often Americans forget about or ignore this day and I was pleased to be able to participate in their celebration...well most of those women are American citizens. Was I speaking inclusively or was I unconsciously drawing a divide between them and “Americans”? I even find it difficult to write this column at times, because I forget to modify American every time I type it, even when the whole point is that whites have co-opted the word American to mean them (at least inside their own heads)...so what about everyone else? We need to do a better job of educating our children and grandchildren so that they do not have to unlearn discriminatory or biased language and thinking. I think about these topics a lot, but I have still not broken all of the old bad habits.

► Many states have adopted, or are considering, legislation naming English as the first and only acceptable language for school, commerce etc. They do not want to provide ballots or public information in other languages and set time limits on the provision of English language classes.

► Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, encounter hostility and suspicion too often, although we are a nation of immigrants.

► Periodically someone on the religious right will assert that our history defines this country as Christian. This may arise when the conflict is between secularism and conservative Christianity, or when the conflict is between Christianity and another religion.

The list of ways we divide, subdivide and alienate one another is lengthy. As the dominant culture and economic force, white Americans need to stop and think about the damage being done.

Technically, an American is a person who, by birth or naturalization, is a citizen of the United States of America. Culturally, that encompasses a wide variety of beliefs, accents, lifestyles, races etc. What unifying beliefs or concepts hold us together? How should we share them with one another and with the next generation? And how can we each be nourished in the safety of commonality and still strengthen our communities by embracing diversity?

Let’s talk about what it mean to be American, because we need to do a better job of including everyone.

Treasurer's Report

January 2007



League of Women Voters—RoMaFH
Treasurer's Report March 26, 2007

Previous Checking Balance, February 25, 2007 \$2,000.58

Income:

Dues 1 @\$40	\$40.00
LWVMNEF reimbursement-MPCA pub. purchase	\$19.81
LWVMNEF "pay" for election hotline volunteers	\$125.00
Finance drive	\$135.00
Total Income:	<u>\$319.81</u>

Expenses:

---Transfer back to Savings	\$200.00
#4128 Joan Stark, Finance postage	\$78.00
#4129 F. Sprague, Treasurer postage	\$7.80
#4130 LWVMNEF MPCA pubs. x 4	\$19.81
#4131 Ken Anderson, website 2 years	\$200.00
#4132 Diane Nystrom Voter print and mail	\$103.13
Total Expenses:	<u>\$608.74</u>

Balance in Checking March 26 , 2007 \$1,711.65

Fund Balances:

Checking	\$1,711.65
Savings	\$3,845.78
Education Fund	\$4,603.65

Paid Members: 92 4 family of 2, 1 family of 3, 81 individual



LWVUS Study on Immigration

Scope of Study

The membership of the League of Women Voters approved a national study on immigration policy at its national convention in Minneapolis in June of 2006.

At its October meeting the LWVUS Board adopted the following scope for the LWVUS 2006-2009 Immigration Study:

- Underlying values and principles regarding immigration
- Reasons for migration from other countries, including but not limited to:
 - Effects of global interdependence on migration
 - Motivation of refugees and asylees
 - Motivation of other immigrants
- Current federal immigration policy, including but not limited to:
 - Overview
 - Effectiveness in uniting families
 - Effectiveness in meeting needs of businesses
 - Effectiveness of enforcement



**THE WONDERFUL ROMAFH
BOOK SALE
IS COMING!!!**

**Sunday April 29th from 7:00 am
to 1:30 pm**

We need your books, and we need your help. Please call Joyce Blomquist (651-631-0688) or Nancy Irsfeld (651-633-4741) and let us know how you can help.

☆ **Before Fri. 4/27** - Bring yours, your neighbor's, your friend's or your relative's books, magazines, CDs, DVD's, videos, cassettes, games and puzzles to Georgiana's house at 1961 N. Hamline Ave. as donations for the sale.

☆ **Friday, 4/27 between 1:00 and 5:00** - We have six helpers to meet at Georgiana's house to move boxes of books to Fairview Community Center. Bring any portable bookcases, or other items you wish to loan (like tablecloths, stuffed animals or bookends) to room 118 at Fairview. Call Nancy Irsfeld if you need items picked up.

☆ **Saturday, 4/28 between 8:00 and 2:00** - We have nine helpers to set up tables and bookcases, and to arrange books and other items. This is when the

Human rights concerns
-Impact of immigration, including but not limited to:
Economic effects of authorized and unauthorized immigration
Diversity
Inclusion of immigrants in American society

Subsequently the board has reduced the term of the study from three years to two years. WE must take consensus by January, 2008. There is a huge amount of information for the committee to digest and analyze for the membership. They have begun putting articles on different aspects of the study on the LWVUS website. To read these articles go to www.lwv.org and click on the green sentence under Immigration Study in the lower right hand corner of the page.

A Complicated Reality

As we look ahead to the national study we need to continue our own conversation on immigration issues, begun with the LWVMN study of 2002.

Today, perhaps even more than in 2002, immigration issues raise strong emotional responses from just about everyone. How do we go about finding truth/reality amidst the myths and fears so widespread in the community? Why is this such an emotional topic?

Apart from the Native Americans, we are a nation of immigrants. Some of our ancestors came by choice, some by necessity, some by coercion. Most ethnic groups faced opposition, prejudice and discrimination in the early decades of life in the United States, yet most groups then proceeded to resent the next wave of immigrants from another part of the globe. Emma Lazarus' words have rung hollow to too many seeking a new home in this country. Not only were the myths about America told in their homelands untrue, and life was not easy, but the promise of a welcome failed them and they were sent back due to race, illness, quota, lack of a sponsor or other reasons. At the same time, the changing global economic climate makes it clear that the United States cannot seamlessly absorb any and every person who might wish to seek a better life here.

The rules for admission to the United States have been complicated, biased and have changed to suit the times. It is not surprising that families separated by adherence to the rules would resent families taking shortcuts, but why do so many other people resent immigrants? Also, if the rules have been unfair in the past, does this mean that they must stay unfair?

Immigration issues touch upon many sensitive points such as economics, is my livelihood safe? Identity, those people do not look like me or think like me, how can we both be Americans? a generic fear of the unknown and others. The increased percentage of nonwhite immigrants is hastening the loss of a secure majority status for whites in this country. Is it more difficult to incorporate new immigrants today because of the changing racial mix of immigrants? What about the distinction between documented and undocumented immigrants? How do we treat all people equitably? Some people may feel that the influx of unfamiliar peoples may make it harder to get what they "deserve." But we are all more dependent on one another than we like to admit. (Did you see [A Day Without A Mexican?](#)) It is a complicated reality, and not always a pretty one. There are too many questions and no simple answers.

\$\$\$\$ One example of the complicated reality can be seen in a study done by the comptroller of Texas. With its long border with Mexico, Texas has many immigrants from Mexico and Central America, both with and without proper documentation. The comptroller looked at both the contributions to the state economy and the costs to government of undocumented aliens. The results are interesting.

The comptroller estimated that the absence of the estimated 1.4 million

fun begins, and we'll have snacks to keep you going! We'll decorate the hallway, and put up signs. And we'll have lots of fun doing everything - and getting to know each other better!

☆ **Sunday, 4/29 between 7:00 and 2:00** - We still need one helper for each shift (7-10, 9:30-1:00, 12:30-2:30). **Our greatest need is for help on Sunday from noon until 2:00.** We need to be closed down, boxed up and out of Fairview Community Center by 2:00 pm. We still need two or three more helpers with vans to move "leftovers" back to Georgiana's house for storage, and take bookcases back to owners.

This is a big effort and we appreciate all the help we can get!! As we know from past book sales, the more the merrier!!!

HELP US MAKE THIS THE BEST BOOK SALE WE'VE EVER HAD!!!

undocumented immigrants in Texas in 2005 would have led to a \$17.7 billion dollar loss to Gross State Product and that state revenues collected from undocumented workers exceeded the cost of public services provided by the state by \$424.7 million. On the other hand, she estimated that local governments and hospitals experienced the opposite impact, with a net drain of \$928.9 million for 2005. (See the complete report at http://www.aifl.org/ipc/spotlight/spotlight_122206.pdf) Nothing simple here.

Crime People may believe that undocumented immigrants are dangerous, The Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation: Incarceration Rates Among Native and Foreign-Born Men, by Ruben G. Rumbaut, Ph.D. and Walter A. Ewing, Ph.D. reported on at www.immigrationpolicy.org.states that "Even as the undocumented population has doubled to 12 million since 1994, the violent crime rate in the United States has declined 34.2 percent and the property crime rate has fallen 26.4 percent.

Among men age 18-39 (who comprise the vast majority of the prison population), the 3.5 percent incarceration rate of the native-born in 2000 was 5 times higher than the 0.7 percent incarceration rate of the foreign-born." Nothing simple here.

Families 85% of immigrant families are "mixed," meaning at least one or both parents are non-citizens and one or more children are citizens. Nothing simple here. (www.aifl.org/pubed/pe_census_index.asp)

Education 42% of all naturalized immigrants since 1988 have completed a bachelor's degree or higher, 15% greater than the native average. *ibid.* U.S. schools do not ask whether a child is documented until they reach college. All are offered a free public education. Nothing simple here.

Taxes Immigrants, and immigrant households, pay a considerable amount of taxes to all levels of government. *ibid.* Even workers with faulty documents have taxes withheld (which they cannot get refunded.) Nothing simple here.

Healthcare The data make clear that many recent immigrants and their children are outside the mainstream in terms of their access to health care. Fifty-six percent of low-income, noncitizen immigrants were uninsured in 2004, compared to 23 percent of low-income natives. *ibid.* Nothing simple here.

Numbers Historically, the lowest percentage of foreign-born was 4.7% in 1970, as compared to 14.8% in 1890 when immigration peaked. Today it is about 11%. www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/charts/final.fb.shtml Nothing simple here.

This only touches the tip of the iceberg. There is a wealth of information available about immigration issues. Check things out online, at the bookstore or the library and through LWVUS. Do it now, and throughout the year and bring your insights to our discussion in April and next year when the national study is completed and we must take consensus.

Some interesting websites to explore:

www.immigrationpolicy.org

The Migration Policy Institute Looks at movements of people around the world, not just to the U.S. www.migrationpolicy.org

www.migrationinformation.org/integration/securing_future.cfm

The American Immigration Law Foundation www.aifl.org

Thanks to Judy Rosenblatt for identifying these sources for us.

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