

VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Roseville, Maplewood and Falcon Heights

January 2005

www.romafh.org

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General Meeting:

Alternative Voting Systems

Tuesday, January 18, 7:00 p.m.

Falcon Heights City Hall

At our November meetings we looked into pros and cons of five voting systems. Now we will determine if we agree on any of the issues raised.

Are you ready to discuss the five systems?

Plurality, our current system, is quite familiar. But what about:

Approval Voting

Instant Runoff Voting

Borda Count

Condorcet

Are there good reasons to consider a change in the system?

You can review the background information in the League of Women Voters of Minnesota publication *Alternative Voting Systems: Facts and Issues* which we received in September.

[If you are unable to attend the general meeting, answer the consensus questions on page 9. and mail them in.]

In case you missed the background of our topic, the following was sent out by the Communications Director of LWVMN in October:

"I Voted for Apples, but I got Pomegranates. It's all in How You Count the Votes"

Apples, oranges, pomegranates, peaches. No. it's pomegranates, peaches, apples, oranges. No. It's oranges, apples, pomegranates, peaches. You can vote for your preference or order your preferences, but the winner depends on which voting system you use to count the votes.

"The 2000 Presidential election challenged Americans' complacency about the accuracy and fairness of our voting system as never before." So says the first sentence in the LWVMN Education Fund's *Alternative Voting Systems: Facts and Issues* study.

According to Marsha Oliver, co-chair of the study, "Election 2000 generated enough interest among LWVMN members for them to adopt a study to learn more about voting system alternatives. The purpose of our study is to provide background information about the four most frequently discussed alternative voting systems in addition to our current Plurality system." The scope of the study is limited to single-seat Minnesota state and local elections, such as governor, state legislators, and mayor.

Voting Systems study co-chair Jane Gilley adds, "We defined voting system as a collection of rules and procedures that establishes how an election will be conducted—how ballots are marked, how votes are tabulated, how many votes are necessary to win, and other election administration procedures. We incorporated the opinions of supporters and opponents of each of the four alternative voting systems researched, as well as views from members of various academic disciplines and leaders of Minnesota's four major political parties."

The current Plurality Voting system used in Minnesota is an unranked voting system also called "First Past the Post". In this system the candidate with the most votes wins even if the candidate receives less than a majority (50+1) of the votes cast.

The Approval Voting System is also an unranked voting system. Voters can vote for as many candidates as they wish and the candidate receiving the greatest total number of votes wins. Instant Runoff Voting, Borda Count, and Condorcet are all ranked voting systems, each having a specified way of tabulating how voter rank the candidates on the ballot.

"Each of the voting systems in the study raises issues that vary depending on what people value and what they want to accomplish," says Gilley. "Is the fact that someone can be elected with less than 50% of the vote important enough to change to a different election system in Minnesota?"

Oliver responds, "The LWV has not come to a decision on that question yet. Our process is to do objective research, write and publish the findings, and then wait to hear from the 2200+ members in our local League units. Local League members around the state will read and discuss the information and see what they think about keeping our current Plurality Method system or recommending an alternative voting system. . . "

[This where we are now—are you ready to participate? If not, you may want to review the publication more carefully!]

Hope Washburn Award and Peggy Thompson Award

These two state honors are given to outstanding League members, the Hope Washburn to a member who has been active on the state level as well as with her own League and in her community, and the Peggy Thompson to a member who stands out in her ongoing contributions to her local League. If you have ideas for either one, please contact one of the Presidents or another board member!

HAPPY NEW YEAR

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

2004 and all the election activities are behind us, but in 2005 the League has lots "going on" also. RoMaFh's first three meetings of the year should be interesting, thought provoking and generate some great discussions. They are:

- ❖ January 18th, 7-9 p.m. at the Falcon Heights City Hall. We will complete the state study consensus questions on the "Voting Methods" issue which was reviewed in our November meeting.
- ❖ February 15th, 7-9 p.m. at the Falcon Heights City Hall is our annual "Lively Issues" meeting.
- ❖ March 15th, 7-9 p.m. at the Roseville City Hall. We are planning a panel discussion on "*Diversity's Hidden Issues: Barriers to Belonging*", moderated by Mindy Greiling.

We're hoping for a great turnout for all of these meetings. For those of you looking for more action, the LWVMN is looking for "Women with a Cause":

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota is looking for women and men who have a cause, or several causes, to join the State Action Committee and make a difference. The Action Committee is composed of League lobbyists who track legislation, perhaps testify at legislative hearings, alert League members and citizens at-large to the twists and turns in key pieces of legislation, and generally try to affect the course of public policy based on League positions. Contact Action Chair Gwen Myers at (952) 545-8696 if you're interested or have questions.

On December 15th the LWVUS issued a press statement calling for protection of civil liberties in honor of Bill of Rights Day. They expressed LWV concern for the sweeping reforms in the Homeland Security Bill (signed into law by President Bush 12/17/04). While most of the legislation follows the 9/11 Commission recommendations, some provisions raise concerns about civil liberties

The HBO film Iron Jawed Angels tells the tale of suffragists who fought for the right to vote. In February 2004, the League collaborated with HBO to co-host preview events and movie-watching parties. Recently, Iron Jawed Angels earned three Golden Globe nominations, including ones for Hilary Swank and Angelica Huston. Be sure to watch the Golden Globe Awards on January 16th to see if this inspiring tale wins!

The "Iron Jawed Angels" fought and won a great battle for women, but we can't be complacent. There are today serious issues concerning civil liberties, protection of our natural resources and support for education, health care and other services that allow those who aren't part of the "power elite" to enjoy the American Dream. Remember, the League has always been an activist organization and we all need to be active in promoting League positions in 2005. Let's go girls (and guys)!

Windows and Mirrors for All

Martin Luther King Day

By Florence Sprague

January 15th. We all now know this as the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with the holiday celebrated, in true American fashion, on a Monday, regardless. [the 17th this year] How do we celebrate this holiday? Mostly not at all. Most of us still go to work, wear our regular clothing, prepare no special foods, play no special music, attend no special events, and do not gather with friends and relatives. It being January in Minnesota I'll leave out picnics altogether. This holds true for me, I'm afraid, all except for one eye-opening year.

No doubt you know of the large celebratory breakfast held at the Minneapolis Convention Center, with famous speakers and recognitions. Not something to which your average Jane can get a ticket. So when a friend announced at church that a number of churches around the Twin Cities were sponsoring overflow events with free breakfast (free will donation) and the speech shown on a large screen, I signed up to attend at a church on the east side. Then I started looking for someone to go with me. One person who I thought might be interested was already committed to attending the main event for her job, another had to work, and so on, so I went alone.

I had a hearty breakfast, and the speaker was inspiring, but most important, I had to push myself out of my comfort zone, for at that event I was very definitely a minority, and I knew no one there, white or black. Everyone was pleasant and courteous, but it was revealing to be on the other side of the divide. I was grateful that my job has me sitting side-by-side with young people of many races every day, getting to know them as individuals, not representatives of some group. I hope this helped me to not look obviously uncomfortable, for I was constantly worrying about the impression I was making. As a representative of my race. Would I make whites look sincere or

shallow? Did they respect me for coming or feel I was intruding?

What a burden... and I only had to carry it for 3 hours... one Monday morning.

I let myself off the hook and did not go on to the rally at St. Paul Central High School. This year, that is my goal. [if I don't have to work] Anybody want to come along?

Related reading:

Warriors Don't Cry, by Melba Pattillo Beals A memoir by one of the teenagers in the first group of students to integrate Little Rock's Central High School in 1957 under the guard of the 101st Airborne.

Nominations to LWVMN

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota is beginning the process of developing a slate of officers and directors for election at Convention 2005. Local League members are encouraged to submit recommendations for nominees.

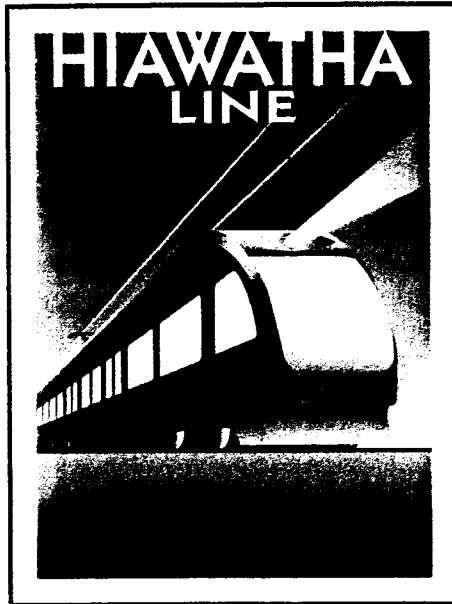
To be nominated are a president, three vice presidents, a secretary, a treasurer, up to eight directors, a nominating committee chair and two nominating committee members. The slate will be elected in May and serve for two years.

Candidates should be enthusiastic and dedicated to League goals; able to assume, as well as delegate responsibility; able to work well with others, as well as independently; self-starters who enjoy a challenge. We need board members with a variety of skills and talents—people who are dependable, creative and/or flexible. The committee always tries to assemble a slate reflecting the diversity of the membership throughout the state.

The presidents have the forms to be used for nominations that outline the information requested. (If you have any special questions, Judy Stuthman is a member of the nominating committee.)

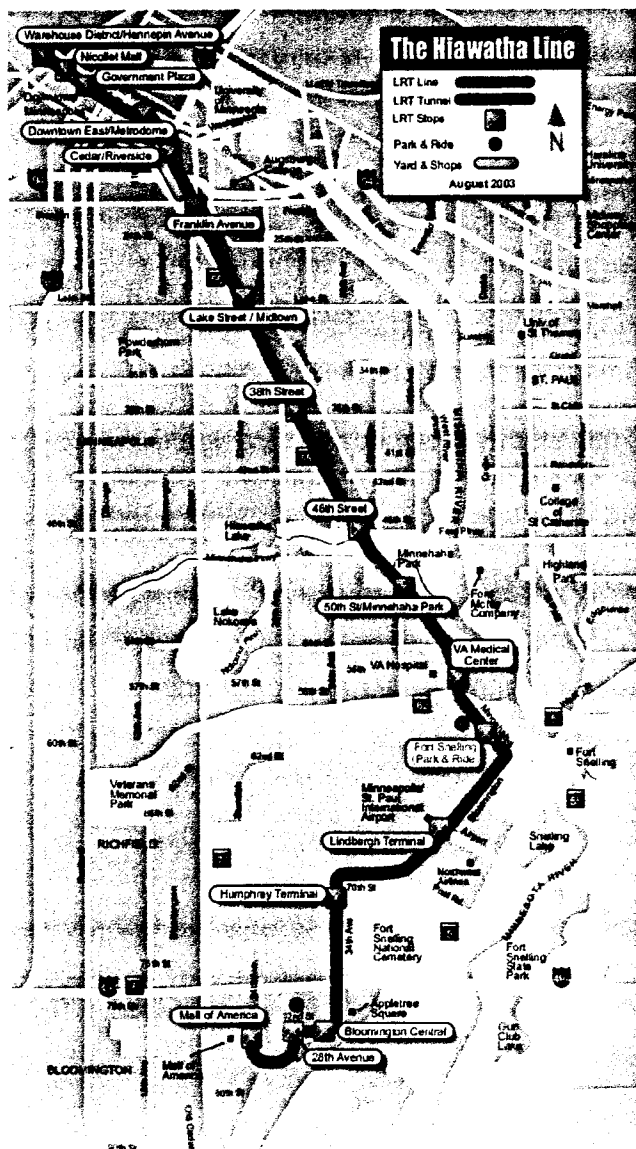
Completed nomination forms are to be sent to Karen Langsjoen, Chair, Nominating Committee, 911 36th Ave. N., St. Cloud, MN 56303

[Above information was sent to League presidents Nov. 22, 2004]



facts

**Minnesota's
first light-rail line
opened in June and
will extend to the airport
and Mall of America
December 4**



Length: 12 miles, connecting four of the Twin Cities' most popular destinations – downtown Minneapolis, the Metrodome, Minneapolis/Saint Paul International Airport and the Mall of America in Bloomington.

Stations: 17 (see map)

Opening: Partial service between the Warehouse District and Fort Snelling began June 26; full service to the airport and Mall of America will begin December 4.

Ridership: 19,300 per weekday in 2005 and 24,600 per weekday by year 2020

Patron generators: Downtown Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 11 neighborhoods, Minnehaha Park, Minneapolis/Saint Paul International Airport and Mall of America.

Major park-and-ride lots: At Fort Snelling and 28th Avenue stations

Milestones achieved:

- Broke ground January 17, 2001
- Delivered 18 rail cars
- Completed 15 stations
- Mined airport rail tunnels
- Relocated utilities in downtown
- Installed all track



The Hiawatha Light Rail Line

By Donna Peterson

Bringing light rail to the Twin cities is getting positive public reaction, as I know from personal experience.

Most of you likely know that ridership on the part that opened in June has greatly exceeded expectations. With the opening of the last four stops on December 4, it is now 12 miles long! I was there, working at a table at the airport hosted by Transit for Livable communities. People asked about the North Star Commuter Rail, the Central Corridor and about transferring from buses to the train. Also wanted to know about transit development for the suburbs, the Cedar Ave. Busway connecting southern suburbs and the Mall of America. The Metro Transitways Development Board has developed a three-part vision to meet future transportation needs of the Twin Cities area. This includes roadway improvements, better bus service, and new transitways.

Most of us could agree we need more and better routes for getting around. An international scholar told me this fall that bus transportation is worse here than in her home country of Armenia. Transit for Livable communities (TLC) is serving as a voice for transportation choices. The Twin Cities invests much less in public transit than peer cities. While MnDOT has ongoing money for highway expansion, there is no money allocated for ongoing transit expansion.

TLC raises the visibility of transportation policy in Minnesota as a key social justice, environmental, and urban livability issue. They do this in many ways. They research how our area can be more economically competitive, reduce congestion and protect the health of our families and communities. TLC is building a network of supporters through their Transportation Choices Network. Over 1000 people signed up to be part of this network at the June and December openings of the Hiawatha Light Rail Line. Want to know more? Call 651-767-0298 and request some general information or a sample newsletter or just ask to join the network! Visit www.tlcminnesota.org

Light-rail vehicles: 24 cars, each 94-foot long and manufactured by Bombardier. Trains often consist of two cars coupled together. Each car has four doorways and can hold 66 seated passengers plus standing room for 120. Inside each car are four luggage racks and four bicycle hangers.

Accessibility: Fully ADA compliant stations and transit with four wheelchair locations per vehicle. Level boarding at each train door. Ramps and tactile edges at all stations. Elevators at stations on bridges.

Power: Electrically powered by wires 16-feet overhead.

Yard and shop: 26.5 acres with maintenance facility between Cedar and Franklin avenues.

Top speed: 55 mph, with a general service speed of 40 mph and slower speed in downtown.

Rush hour service: Trains every 7½ minutes from 6:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 6:30 p.m.

Base service: Trains every 10 minutes from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Early evening service: Trains every 15 minutes from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Late evening/early morning service: Trains every 30 minutes from 10:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. and from 4:00 to 6:00 a.m.

Coming in February: Choosing program studies

Program planning is an annual event. We discuss suggestions for appropriate local topics to spend time on in the next year. We also begin the process of selecting program for either the state or national level of League, depending on the year. This year we will be considering items suggested for state-level study.

The first step in the process is for local Leagues, boards and individuals to submit ideas that interest or concern them. LWVMN collects, organizes, and distributes them for further consideration. The State board will make recommendations, and delegates to the state convention will make the final decisions on program for 2005-2007.

The following are the first round of suggestions received. You will have a chance to give your opinion about them at the Lively Issues meeting in February.

Criminal Justice

Overcrowded Prisons in Minnesota – the effect of Minnesota sentencing guidelines on the size of our prison population; the issue of privatizing prisons in MN; alternate forms of punishment.
[LWV White Bear/North Oaks/Mahtomedi]

Education

Financing of Public Education – is today's quality of education at risk? What part of child's education is the state obligated to cover and what is "fluff"? when costs to operate increase and enrollments decrease, how do schools keep an equal playing field? How does NCLB (No child left behind) play into the financial crisis?

[LWV Eastern Carver County and LWVMN Action Committee]

Government

1) The Role of Partisan Politics in Local Elections – Should local municipal and county elections have party endorsements for candidates? In light of the divisive nature of partisan politics, should party endorsements of local candidates be discouraged? Could it be regulated? Concerns are the role of party money and influence in what are offices dealing with primarily non-partisan issues.

[LWV South Tonka]

2) Safeguarding Our Vote – The scope could range from the effect of technology (from DREs to e-mail manipulation of voters) and the function of exit polling here and in other countries, to deciding what role League should play in future elections.

[individual member]

3) A study of proportional allocation of Minnesota Presidential Electoral College members – The study would evaluate the impact of assigning Electoral College members proportionally to the Minnesota votes cast in the election for the President. The study would consider what it would mean in terms of national campaigns, other states' experience, state political party viability, citizen voting rights, and the LWVUS position supporting abolishment of the Electoral College.

[LWV Woodbury/ Cottage Grove]

4) Civility in Government

[individual member]

5) Funding of roads in rural Minnesota – There are problems in adequately funding maintenance of roads in rural counties. The Association of MN Counties has a consensus position to raise the gasoline tax by 10 cents. The lack of a bonding bill last session has put the maintenance/safety of bridges in rural counties in jeopardy. [individual member]

6) Transportation -- Analysis of Minnesota's current transportation policies as they relate to financing and planning of roads and other transportation options. Transportation is a hot issue through-

out the state, although specific issues differ in urban and rural areas. Important aspects include funding, a the mix of transportation options and state support of those options and the environmental impact of Minnesota's transportation choices.

[LWV St. Cloud, LWV Shoreview/Arden Hills, Action Committee LWVMN]

7) JOBZ grants boondoggle!!!! – Federal Reserve chair could be a resource here.
[individual member]

8) A study to reword/update the Open Meeting Law – New rules/criteria for Victim Services from the Office of Justice were put forth in a newsletter created on their website which changed both administration and funding. Computer e-mails and instant newsletters seem a new take on the good old boys in the old "smoke filled room" but the Attorney General's office ruled this met the criteria of the open meeting law.

[individual member]

9) Proportional representation

10) Update of position on the Electoral College
[LWV Shoreview/Arden Hills]

11) Early Voting and Absentee Voting – study possible changes in MN law with respect to early voting and absentee voting; analysis of the impact of various systems of early voting and absentee voting in other states to see what the impact of similar changes would be in MN. Given the increase in the number of states that have adopted early voting and given the questions that have arisen about absentee voting in the 2004 election, it is possible that changes to MN law will be proposed in the near future. Current LWVMN positions do not address these issues.

[LWV St. Cloud Area, LWV Shoreview/Arden Hills]

12) Separation of Church and State

13) Election Procedures

14) Department of Agriculture, Pollution Control Agency and Agencies in MN
[LWVMN Action Committee]

Natural Resources

1) Wind energy/fuel cell technology as a component of economic development in rural areas

2) The push for more coal plants and iron range electrical plants and CO2 discharge – global warming vs jobs

3) Ethanol plants – Are there adequate health regulations covering these (water treatment, pollutants discharged, high traffic on rural roads)? What about nuisance regulations (poor management leading to bad batches >smell)?

4) The cost of urban sprawl/ benefits of smart growth – consider 1000Friends of MN as a resource.
[individual member]

Social Policy

1) Health Care – As population diversifies, are health care facilities up to serving the multicultural patients/clients; i.e., language and cultural differences? Hospitals, clinics, assisted care, nursing homes: How is contact made when English is not spoken; what staff or materials are available for daily contacts; what emergency services are available?

[LWV Eastern Carver County]

2) Casino Gambling – At the LWVUS Convention there was more than one state trying to eliminate or reduce the amount of gambling money's contribution to the state budget or education funding. Aside from any moral issues or social consequences or the view of gambling as a cruel tax against people who never learned statistics or probability theory, they found it provided inconsistent levels of revenue from year to year.

[individual member, LWVMN Action Committee]

CONSENSUS QUESTIONS – Alternative Voting Systems: Facts and Issues

Name _____

Phone/e-mail _____

1. Does the voting public need to understand how votes in an election are tabulated and how a candidate actually wins an election?
Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

2. In an election, is it important that a candidate win with a majority (50 +1) of the votes, no matter how many candidates are in the election?
Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

3. Do you support the right of local governments to choose an alternative voting system for their own local elections?
Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

Please indicate your level of support by checking the appropriate box.

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
4.a. Plurality – state level				
4.b. Plurality – local level				
5.a. Approval Voting – state level				
5.b. Approval Voting – local level				
6.a. Instant Runoff Voting – state level				
6.b. Instant Runoff Voting – local level				
7.a. Borda Count – state level				
7.b. Borda Count – local level				
8.a. Condorcet – state level				
8.b. Condorcet – local level				

9. If you supported more than one voting method, which one method do you favor the most?

Comments:

[Mail completed form to Barb Yates by January 18. Timing is important as all results must be combined, approved and returned to LWVMN by Feb. 1]

TO: Barbara Yates, 3057 Wheeler St. N., RV 55113 or bjyates29@aol.com



Please Circulate and Post

A citizen's forum in Northwest Ramsey County dedicated to the improvement of the community. Meets Friday mornings at the Rose Oval Center, Cty. Rd C & Civic Center Dr., Roseville. Meeting room is on the west side (upper level) of the building: enter the parking lot from Woodhill Dr.

between Lexington and Griggs. Meetings are open to the public at no charge. Continental breakfast available. Programs begin promptly at 8:30 am. and end promptly at 9:30 am.

January, 2005, Programs

Jan. 7 Kenneth Haider, Director, Ramsey County Public Works

Subject: Activities of the County Dept. of Public Works Activities of this department affect all of us in one way or another every day. The recent move of the dept. into a new multi-million \$ facility sets an example of intergovernmental cooperation.

Jan. 14 John Shardlow, Pres., Dahlgren, Shardlow & Urban

Subject: The Redevelopment of TCAAP This Minneapolis firm leads a consortium of firms in preparing a master plan for the redevelopment of the TCAAP (arsenal) property for the City of Arden Hills. The property is now in the process of transfer from federal ownership.

Jan. 21 Mayor Beverly Aplikowski, City of Arden Hills

Subject: Issues Facing Arden Hills Mayor Aplikowski will give us an update on what is happening in Arden Hills, current issues facing the city, and the city's perspective on the TCAAP redevelopment.

Jan. 28 Dr. Frank Busta, Dir., Nat'l Center for Food Protection and Defense

Subject: The Role of the Nat'l Center for Food Protection and Defense Dr. Busta, emeritus Prof. and Head of U of M's Dept. of Food Science & Nutrition, is director of the Center, one of three such centers each funded at \$5M per year by the US Dept. of Homeland Security. The Assoc. Dir. in Mike Osterholm, well known for his dire predictions of the potential of food terrorism. Dr. Busta will explain what the Center is and does.

Citizen's Forum Mission: We are a citizen's community forum of Northern Ramsey County for informational, educational, and nonpartisan topics presented by public and private sources in order to become better informed on the important current issues affecting our personal lives and our communities. For more information, contact CoChairs Dave Norrgard (651-690-8552) or Mary Ann Palmer (651-633-8140, Sec. Bob Nethercut (651-481-7239) or Treasurer Marilyn Rose-Sanft (651-484-7438)

**Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues
Quarterly Meeting Saturday, January 22
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

**Richfield City Hall 6700 Portland Ave S
Richfield, MN**

“HOMELAND SECURITY: ARE WE READY?”

**--A discussion of emergency management in the
metropolitan area and how homeland security
requirements impact these services**

Questions? Call Lorraine Fischer 651-777-5037

League of Women Voters of
Roseville, Maplewood and Falcon Heights
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