

LWVUS 2010 Convention Notes

June 11, 2010

Criminal Justice Sentencing Reform. Due to late arrival I missed this caucus, but the material is available from sharoninsc@hotmail.com.

June 12, 2010

Safe Drilling and Mining Caucus.

- A. FRACing for gas (<http://lwvtopkins.org>). The root problem is what is called a “split estate”, meaning that the surface owner has sold the mineral rights to someone else, usually a gas company. See www.splitestate.com. Unwilling surface owners can be forced to participate, or “pooled”. As a result of a horizontal drilling technique called FRACing, both gas and drilling chemicals can leak into the water table. Many drilling chemicals are proprietary and not disclosed to the government, even though they can have adverse health effects, as can the volatile organic chemicals in gas itself (called “VOCs”). There are collateral surface effects, including 24/7 lighting, road damage from heavy trucks, truck traffic and waste water ponds. It takes about two acres to support a pad for this type of drilling. The problem is the regulatory patchwork that regulates FRACing and that numerous federal environmental laws have exceptions for oil and gas exploration and production. The benefit that these operations bring are the severance taxes collected by the jurisdictions in which they operate.
- B. Mountain top removal is another bad mining practice (see www.youtube.com for a video on the process. The results are loss of habitat, water pollution, fewer jobs in this type of mining, coal truck road damage, and loss of recreational river rafting.
- C. Offshore drilling. A Santa Barbara delegate said her community has recovered from the 1980 oil spill off its coast, resulting in state and local regulations that are stricter than federal ones. Also, the CA League has used its environmental positions to oppose offshore drilling even though it is not specifically addressed in such positions. See www.greenplanetfinancial.com for tips on using shareholder activism to pressure individual companies to change.

Plenary Session. Please see the online Reports of Convention Action for the matters decided by the Delegates. These notes will summarize non-action items, such as interesting speakers or reports.

Representative John Lewis. He represents Georgia’s 5th Congressional District which includes Atlanta. John Lewis was born in 1940 and grew up in rural Alabama on a farm which is still in his family. He told a hilarious story about fooling sitting hens into laying more eggs, and preaching to them to practice his oratory. He said, the struggle for political participation in our country continues and that the LWV has played an important role, for which he thanked us. We still have a distance to go to make a more perfect union and the vote is key. The electoral college is obsolete. He quoted from his “One Man One Vote” speech given during Martin Luther King’s March on Washington in 1963. He mentioned continuing racial slurs, such as “counting jelly beans in a jar”. I’m familiar with this reference since it resulted in a class action

against Texaco when I was General Counsel of a Texaco affiliate, also half owned by Saudi Aramco. My company avoided this class action by engaging civil rights leader Benjamin Hooks, retired federal judge James DeAnda, and former Houston mayor Kathy Whitmire to mediate any employee discrimination claims against the company, with the result all such claims were resolved to everyone's satisfaction without litigation. As a result of the Texaco litigation, it hired its first African American General Counsel, Patrick Deval, now Governor of Massachusetts.

President Obama. The LWVUS President read a letter of congratulation from the President.

LWVUS President's Address. Mary Wilson's commitment to the League is a lifetime one, including continuing the post WWI effort to make the US a good citizen of the world. Her focus is "members, money and media", which she considers weapons in this fight. LWVUS is considering a potential change in its financial model so the local leagues can keep more money. We must be civil, but it is OK to be edgy. She requested members to consider legacy contributions to the League.

Walter Shur. This gentleman funded leadership development training in memory of his wife, Ruth, establishing the Ruth S. Shur Leadership Institute under League auspices. National members have already received training, and will train state members, who will in turn train local members. According to his wife, there are three kinds of people: those who make things happen, those of who watch things happen, and the majority who don't have a clue what is happening. She said, save a member of the majority by having him or her join the League.

Nominating Committee Report. I include this report because it might be useful to LWVTC when we seek new leadership. The criteria for the Officers and the Board are: Computer literacy, communications skills, financial basics, organizations skills, time availability, experience (other non-profits, other League leadership, attendance at meetings, and participation in fund raising). The process for finding new leaders is outreach at State conventions and emails to all members. One third of the LVW Board is new members, one third have served one term and one third have served two terms. There were no nominations from the floor, but it was suggested to add the UN Observer be added as a Board member.

Campaign Oversight Committee. This Committee will look into any voting irregularities reported to it.

Roll Call of States. Each State was given one minute to review its achievements, a good source of ideas. Oregon has a two part Water Study, and so does Utah, which may be of interest to LWVTC. Alaska has a publication called "Civility – Ten Rules that Work". California reported the development of www.Smartvoter.org that bears investigation, and it is powered by Easy Web, which LWVTC is using. Minnesota has a program called "LOTT", Leaders of Today and Tomorrow, not to be confused with our local LOTT that treats waste water.

Lisa Sanchez. Lisa is a former advisor to President George W. Bush and an experienced consultant with a focus on Hispanics. Her address was called, "You've Come a Long Way, Maybe". Women are only 17% of Congress. She bemoaned the media characterizations of "the

Ditz” (Sarah Palin), “the Witch” (Hillary Clinton), and “the Media Darling” (Michelle Obama) because it proves the 2008 Presidential campaign was very sexist. She says that women have never been taught to deal with conflict and competition, but visiting UW Law Professor Douglas M. Branson says it is a mistake for women to “be like a man”. Research shows that women candidates are more independent and more likely to compromise to achieve a result. The 2010 campaign will be unique because both industry and government are not trusted by the public. This may favor women.

Federal Role in Public Education Caucus. This was a proposed LWVUS study that was ultimately approved. The caucus presenting it was standing room only, with over 100 attendees. Each state has a different system and different funding for education. There are multiple federal programs affecting education, many of which are outside the Department of Education. The purpose of the study is to reach consensus on the relationship between federal, state and local governments on things such as standards like adequate yearly progress (AYP), accountability, teacher training, special needs students (including language and culture), global competitiveness, and unfunded mandates. The handout has a list of 21 relevant websites. Currently the only national LWV position is on equal access to education. Charter schools are very controversial. CA could not reach consensus on this issue. Other issues (for state or local leagues) are text books, teacher tenure, role of teacher unions, vocational training, graduation rates, advanced placement, class size, length of school year, arts and sports, and equitable funding. The LWVTC does not have any positions on these issues. Local leagues may be asked to interview school superintendents and ask them how much federal spending they get and how do they spend it.

June 13, 2010

New Presidents Workshop. The Power Point will be available online. Our speaker said to take lessons from the kitchen (yikes, I can’t cook).

1. Read the Recipe – Job descriptions, files, budget, League Basics, President’s Packet, and important work deadlines.
2. Know Your Limitations – Delegate, review the assignment, organize the task, recruit, explain importance, and assess progress.
3. Be Prepared - Help when things go wrong, praise when they go well, plan the Board meeting, time the agenda, circulate reports, do calendaring online and the VOTER, and have a planning meeting.
4. File the Recipe – Save materials only as long as they are current or until they have been replace by updated materials, subject to legal record keeping requirements for non-profits. An annual report is a good idea.
5. Patience is a Virtue – Listen, be tactful, have humor, and thank people for coming to an event.
6. Accept Compliments - Give the team credit, learn from mistakes, and celebrate successes.
7. Budget – For travel, hotel, meals and registration fees for League delegates who go to councils and conventions.
8. Marketing – Show up at community events.

Plenary Session AM. See the online Report of Convention Action for proposals to be considered on a transparency addition to the SARA (security, accuracy, accountability, and accessibility) Resolution on voting procedures, filibuster elimination, safe drilling and mining, Medicare for all, Gulf of Mexico oil spill, Peace department, lifting the travel ban to Cuba, financial institutions, and a Privatization study.

Program Planning Report. 273 leagues submitted recommendations and 400 members signed up for the discussion list. LWWUS recommended the study on the role of the federal government in education, concurrence to amend the arms control position, and retaining all other positions about Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, and Social Policy (summarized in the 2010 Program and Workbook).

Concurrence Motions. Add Marriage Equality to the LWWUS Equal Opportunity position and add the Popular Vote Compact to the LWWUS position on the election of the President (this Compact is an alternative to a Constitutional Amendment).

Resolution Consideration Motions. Lifting the ban on travel to Cuba will be considered, but the resolution on peace in the Middle East was ruled out of order.

Executive Director Report. The server capacity for www.Vote411.org is donated by Yahoo. LWWUS also has a Facebook page with 6000 “likes”. For more, see the 2010 Program and Workbook at pages 46 and 57.

Gerrymandering Movie. This was an independent film premiering at the Convention. The problem is that incumbent politicians draw their own districts with a view to being re-elected. The solution is to put the power into an independent citizens’ commission (as has been done in WA). “Competition improves performance”, says CA Governor Arnold Schwarznegger. In 2008, Texas Democrats left the state to deprive the Republicans of the ability to gerrymander their state. The TX Governor sent the TX Rangers to bring them back, but the OK state troopers said they didn’t have jurisdiction. Katrina led to the redistricting of New Orleans and a loss of black voting power. The film says Obama benefited from redistricting. He lost when his district was predominately black, but won when it was redrawn to include white liberals. Another problem is prison based gerrymandering, because prisoners are counted as population, but they don’t vote, making it possible to elect someone in such a district with as few as two votes (this actually happened in IL). Iowa has the best system because it is non-partisan, although some would say because that no matter how you slice Iowa, it is the same. In most other western democracies, redistricting is not political (the party chooses its representatives in proportion to the votes they receive in any given election).

Plenary Session PM.

Panel of Former LWWUS Presidents (from 1968 to Present). These eight women provided a wonderful walk down memory lane, including their advocacy on issues such as the Vietnam War, the LWWUC sponsored 1980 first Presidential debates (Carter-Regan), a NATO fact-finding trip in connection with a National Security Study, the Equal Rights Amendment campaign, the Cold War, Title IX (equality in funding women’s sports), the Motor-Voter Act

(using drivers' licenses for voter registration), the Brady Bill, Campaign Finance reform (McCain-Feingold), Election 2000, the Help America Vote Act, and the Patriot Act. They identified some key accomplishments in the last ninety years since LWVUS's founding as leadership training, support for fair international trade, the League's reputation as a well informed organization that can be trusted, and effective lobbying. Their advice to new League Presidents is to delegate, keep your cool, ask people to join, set an example for civil discourse, and do transition planning.

Treasurer's Report. The complete details are in one of the Convention handouts, but the LWVUS will end the biennium on June 30, 2010 in the black, with a mid-course correction that included reducing both revenues and expenses and a small transfer of funds from the reserve.

2011-2012 LWVUS Budget. The complete details are in the 2010 Program and Workbook beginning on page 39. The goals of this budget are to support core functions, match revenue and spending, sustain the League's impact and visibility, and organizational development. These goals could also guide the LWVTC Budget. What's new? New items include the national study on the Federal Role in Education, improvements to the League's technology structure, targeted advocacy programs, a national website upgrade, planned giving prospect research, an new all member publication, and leadership training. It is proposed to transfer \$469,000 from the restricted and unrestricted reserves to this budget. The Ed Fund budget will be approved by the Board, not the Delegates. Direct marketing includes donor acquisition, advocacy, and public relations costs.

Climate Change Toolkit Caucus. This online tool kit is the result of a task force established in 2006 to advise the LWVUS Board on climate change issues and was formed of members with expertise on this subject. The tool kit can be found at: http://participate.lwv.org/c/9217/t/6398/p/salsa/web/common/public/content_item_KEY=3766. There is a discussion list that can be found on LWVUS website Members page. In the tool kit, you will find the basics of climate change (including links to original research), options for choosing a role for your League (including some canned VOTER articles), tips for engaging individuals and your community (including resources for children and youth), tips for mobilizing your community (including links to footprint calculators), tips for promoting public policy, and resources. There are some good tunes included, such as Earthman Blues, Pledge of Allegiance (for children), and Maybe, Just Maybe (a rap tune). Pending federal legislation on energy and climate change includes a Republican effort to block EPA regulation of green house gases, which was defeated in the Senate, but not by 60 votes. The House has passed a Climate Change bill, but it will need 60 votes to pass in the Senate. Unfortunately, the fact that the US lags Europe in clean energy does not persuade Senators, but the BP well blow-out may help get those votes. Citizen polls indicate that the public understands the US dependence on foreign oil is bad, but we shouldn't substitute dependence on foreign clean energy technology, such as windmills from China. While nuclear energy may be clean, it can't compete in the marketplace. Go to www.350.org (Bill McKibben's organization) for a list of ten things you can do by October 10, 2010 to conserve energy.

June 14, 2010

Immigration Caucus. After this workshop, I purchased the DVD Power Point and script because it would be a good program for a LWVTC general meeting. Based on its national study, the LWVUS took the position that it does not support undocumented immigration. In the beginning, the US had no restrictions on immigration and immigrants with the where with all came to the US for work (from the Chinese working on our transcontinental railroad in the mid 19th century to the Bracero farm worker program which ended in 1964). In 1994, NAFTA called for elimination of trade barriers, allowing US agricultural products to displace 200,000 Mexican farm workers. Popular immigrant jobs are agriculture, construction, hospitality, and health care. More than half the US Nobel prize winners have been foreign born, and 41% of our venture capitalists are legal immigrants. The last major immigration legislation was the 1986 Immigration Control Act. It is estimated that 4% of the US population are undocumented immigrants, but the current recession is likely to reduce that number. All of the current immigration categories have quotas and long backlogs, except marriage to a US citizen, priority workers filling US shortages, investors with \$1 million, and 70,000 qualifying annually for political asylum. The US demand for unskilled labor cannot be met without immigration according to Department of Labor statistics. On controversial section of the 1986 law is section 286(g) which authorizes the training of local police to enforce immigration laws, under the supervision of a local citizens committee and the speaker recommended that local Leagues request proof that this part of the law is observed. The SAVE bill (HR 3308) and the CIR ASAO bill (HR 4321) now before Congress are consistent with the League's immigration position. For more information, go to www.lwv.org, click on Issues, then click on Social Policy.

Plenary Session. The Delegates passed By-Law Amendments 1, 2 and 3, but defeated proposed Amendment 4 (see 2010 Program and Workbook at page 47 for details). The Delegates approved studies on the Federal Role in Public Education and on Privatization of government functions, proposed by the LWVWA. The Delegates passed concurrences (additions to current positions) relating to Arms Control, Marriage Equality, and the National Popular Vote Compact. The Delegates voted to retain all other LWVUS positions and passed Resolutions on Lifting the Travel Ban to Cuba, Safe Drilling and Mining, SARA Transparency, Medicare for All, and the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Emergency (despite its shortcomings). The last resolution was not based on facts, focused on blame, and used ambiguous and provocative language. I doubt that it will help advocacy efforts to pass any energy related legislation. The Safe Drilling and Mining resolution is much better for this purpose and covers offshore drilling.

Redistricting Workshop. LWVUS will focus its efforts on redistricting transparency and citizen involvement, not on reforming the system. This effort will be chaired by retiring President Mary Wilson. LWVUS has participated as a friend of court in Texas and North Carolina cases that went to the US Supreme Court, without success. The goal of redistricting is to ensure each district has roughly equal population (Baker v. Carr, USSC 1964), but only about 25% of the Congressional races are competitive (one candidate from each party). Shape doesn't matter. Redistricting can be abused to eliminate incumbents or challengers, dilute minority votes, or split communities that want something from their representatives. WA has an independent body in charge of the redistricting process. Ways to influence the map include going to the press, drafting equitable maps, testimony, and holding model commissions.

Population is determined by the US Census, so everyone is counted including children, non-citizens, and prisoners. Minority communities can be “cracked” or “packed”. Courts look at the “totality of the circumstances” to determine if this has occurred. Some states are subject to clearance of voting district changes by the courts or the Department of Justice due to a history of manipulation (mostly in the South).

Diverse Judiciary Workshop. Georgia Chief Justice Huntstein noted that white men hold 74% of the judicial positions in the US. Just like jury pools, which must represent the local population proportionately, so should judges in her opinion. Judges should be fair and impartial, decide cases based on facts and law, and treat everyone with respect. Fifty percent of President Obama’s judicial appointments have been women, and 15% of them have been women of color. Brennan Center counsel Ciara Torres-Spellisey, author of the Center’s publication on “Improving Judicial Diversity”, says the press is obsessed with the fact the US Supreme Court nominee Kagan is single, childless and does not cross her legs! Neither judicial appointments or elected judges are working to create a diverse bench due to implicit bias. President of the Hispanic National Bar Association, Zuraya Tapia-Alfaro, noted that fewer Hispanic women are lawyers than men (contrary to other minorities where women lawyers are the majority). She did a study of barriers, such as lack of role models, isolation in law school, a “layered” glass ceiling at work (for example, being confused with the translator or coffee girl), and lack of direct access to clients.

June 15, 2010

Enfranchising the Under-Represented Caucus. Public advocacy for voter protection (PAVP) is an effort to include under-represented Asians, Blacks, Latinos, Youth and those with less than \$30,000 annual income. Section 7 of the National Voting Rights Act requires public assistance agencies to offer voter registration, but the Arizona League did a follow-up survey after the Department of Justice completed a non-compliance investigation, reporting unsatisfactory results. However, the DOJ received the survey with a “closed mouth”, but the State Department of Economic Security was more responsive. The DOJ has issued Compliance Guidelines which may be a response to the Arizona effort. The Arizona League and other pro-vote organizations are sending a letter to organizations with a vested interest in voting, such as homeless shelters and youth organizations, advocating the Compliance Guidelines. However, voting is not the highest priority for people who don’t know where their next meal or shower is coming from. The Arizona League has developed a sign for public assistance offices which says, “Voting Affects Government Policy, Policy Affects Finances, Finances Affects Your Life, VOTE FOR YOUR LIFE.” For Youth, World Wrestling Entertainment has partnered with voter registration organizations in a campaign called “Smack Down Your Vote”. See www.smackdownyourvote.com and the 18-30 Voter Issue Brochure (which I provided to Barbara Thiess).

Plenary Session.

Kathleen Sibelius. The US Secretary of Health and Human Services was the keynote speaker. When she attends international health meetings, the US’s recent health care reform legislation is viewed favorably and as long overdue, but she says it is a work in progress. Women are more

likely to be in the US workforce without employer provided insurance, so the new law will benefit them more. HHS will have a website up by July 1, 2010 to compare health insurance policies state by state. Her father was in Congress when Medicare was passed, so she is “the proud daughter of an 89 year old beneficiary”. Unfortunately, the Affordable Health Care Act has generated Medicare scams, which HHS and the Attorney General are trying to end. Seniors need not do anything to receive their new benefits, so don’t sign anything, or give SSN or Medicare number to anyone.

Awards. Houston, TX won the Online Engagement award, Bellingham-Whatcomb County won the Connection with the Community Award, LWV California won the Redistricting award, and Oak Park, Illinois won the Pioneer award for a project called “Roll out the Rain Barrels”.

Per Member Payments, Etc. The Delegates approved an increase the national PMP of \$29.70 for 2010-11 and \$30 for 2011-12, after much debate. The Delegates passed the 2010-2011 Budget, and elected the proposed Officers, Directors, and Nominating Committee. There was a lot of Guidance to the Board submitted by individual speakers, ranging from holding conventions on college campuses, reviewing the Columbia River treaty (which expires in 2014), creation of public state banks, to sharing Lobby Corps materials with local Leagues (since we aren’t allowed to lobby our congressional members). A summary of all guidance received will be posted online is due course.

Elizabeth McNamara. The incoming President’s address re-capped the Convention (“Who Knew?”). As a retired trial attorney, she is used to giving presentations based on the facts and the evidence, so being League President will be similar. She reinforced the League’s core values of studying issues and establishing positions by consensus, but she challenged us to be better administrators. She concluded by saying, “If you are not having fun, no one is having fun!”

Attached hereto is a list of the Materials and Hand-Outs from the 2010 LWVUS Convention.

Materials from LWVUS Convention 2010

Program and Workbook (includes Agenda, Workshop Descriptions, Caucus Descriptions, Convention Awards, New Local Leagues, Rules, Process for Election of Officers, Directors and Nominating Committee, Proposed 2010-2012 Program, Proposed 2010-2011 LWVUS and LWVEF Budgets, By-Law Proposals, Certificate of Incorporation, and LWVUS and LWVEF Committee Reports)

Reports of Convention Action for June 12, 13, 14 and 14

Treasurer's Report

Resolutions Committee Report

UN Observer Report

Audits Task Force Report

Supplement to the 2004-2006 Presidents Packet

List of Ed Fund Pass Thru Grants

Summary of Award Winning Projects

Where Does the LWVUS/EF Budget Go?

Frequently Asked Questions – A Guide to Contacting the LWVUS

Request to Donate to the Carrie Chapman Catt Legacy Society (for putting the League in your estate plans)

Handouts from LWVUS Convention 2010 Caucuses and Workshops

Immigration Power Point & Script

Renewing Democracy After Citizens United (US Supreme Ct Decision Authorizing Corporate Campaign Contributions)

Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Project

Improving Judicial Diversity

Improved Medicare for All

Abolition of the Electoral College

Wining the Vote, Robert PJ Clooney (synopsis of his new book)

Questions for LWV Candidates for Officers, Directors and Nominating Committee

Vote411.org Information

Opening Travel to Cuba

Safe Drilling and Mining

Creating Citizen Benefit Banks

Federal Role in Education Websites

Toolkit for Climate Action Website Information

Helpful Hints for New Presidents

Redistricting Principles for Equitable Voting

Clydia Cuykendall

6/17/10