

# V O T E R

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*The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization of women and men of every age, race, background and political belief. Through more than 1200 local Leagues, state Leagues and the national organization, League members work to promote citizen action on local, state, and national issues.*

## **MAY 6 ANNUAL MEETING TO INCLUDE VOTE ON CONSOLIDATION STUDY**

On Saturday, May 6, members of the Salina League of Women Voters gather at **Martinelli's Little Italy** for their annual meeting. A vote at the business meeting will finalize the City-County Consolidation Study. The day's events begin with the **11:00 a.m.** business meeting.

The Study Committee has worked for many months to produce a recommended position statement on the question of consolidating city and county governments. If their position statement is approved by the full membership, then the League will push local governments and citizens for action based on that position. The proposed position is outlined on page 3.

Besides deciding the consolidation issue, annual meeting signifies the end of the League's year and the beginning of the new year. At this meeting we elect new officers and board members to lead us through the year, we approve the

continuation of existing program items (positions we have reached through past studies and from which we can lobby), adopt a budget, and take any other action that requires the entire membership. And of course, we strengthen our friendships and renew our acquaintances.

Annual meeting is the League's most important meeting of the year—it is truly a celebration!

Please plan to attend. Lunch follows the business meeting and costs \$12. Make reservations by May 3 to Janice Norlin: [jnorlin1@hotmail.com](mailto:jnorlin1@hotmail.com) or 825-7847.

Keynote speaker, **Becky Gassman** of Salina's newly-opened **Child Advocacy Center**, will follow lunch. Her presentation promises to be informative and inspiring. The meeting will conclude by 2:00 p.m. See you there!

—Mary Anne Powell

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thanks to the study committee for all their efforts to produce an outstanding proposal on **City-County Consolidation**. The Board will present the proposal at the Annual Meeting. Many Thanks to David Norlin who chaired the committee and to Ann Zimmerman, Marge and Ted Minton, and Jan Mendel for all the hours of hard work they put into investigating the topic, getting feedback, incorporating the feedback and drafting the final proposal. Great work!

But the study does not end there. Now it is up to the full League membership to vote. A position statement cannot become part of the League program without the approval of the members.

The Annual Meeting May 6 is your

chance to reconnect with the League and voice your opinion about this important issue of local government. Please be a part of the vote!

In addition to the study committee, and our wonderful "Lunch and Learns," I am proposing that we next work on a project that has been discussed for many years.

We want to look at ways to encourage more women to become involved in Politics. Although we have many strong women in political roles in Salina, we still have a long way to go.

We would like to bring together women who have held, or now hold political office. We want to discuss the challenges and rewards of holding a

political office. We'll be asking for some advice from the panel on how to get started, and what steps to take to run a campaign.

If you have an interest in assisting with this event, please contact me at [ginaamcd@aol.com](mailto:ginaamcd@aol.com).

—Gina McDonald

## CALENDAR

### MAY 2006

- 5 Cinco de Mayo (see p. 4)
- 6 Membership Meeting
- 18 Board Meeting

### JUNE 2006

- 10-13 National Conv., Mpls, MN
- 15 Board Meeting

### JULY 2006

- 20 Board Meeting

### AUGUST 2006

- 9-13 Tri-Rivers Fair
- 17 Board Meeting
- tba Membership Meeting

### SEPTEMBER 2006

- 21 Board Meeting

### OCTOBER 2006

- 19 Board Meeting

## HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS

Mary Frances Hogg says, keep this information handy, especially with the start of the legislative session:

### GOV. KATHLEEN SEBELIUS

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# City-County Consolidation

## Proposed position statement up for approval May 6

After months of study, consultation, information gathering and document drafting, the League's study committee has proposed a position statement on the topic of City-County Consolidation for Salina and Saline County. Members of the study committee included rural and urban citizens who have been listening to the questions, concerns, complaints and opinions of city and county residents on this controversial topic.

The committee held three public meetings: first, a Lunch & Learn to present the topic and listen to attendees; second, a public forum featuring staff from the Kansas League of Municipalities and former state senator Dave Kerr; and third, in response to public demand for a voice representing counties, another public forum featuring the director of the Kansas Association of Counties (KAC). A separate meeting with Saline County commissioners and staff was a response to concern from those commissioners that the county's view be thoroughly heard and understood.

The committee heard the concerns expressed by some of the county residents that their rural lifestyle could be urbanized by consolidation. This did not seem to be a worry of the KAC director, who urged

convincingly that good government systems come out of discussions and cooperation among good people.

Taking the rural residents' concerns seriously, the committee chose not to take an outright stand for or against consolidation. The proposed position statement supports a year-long discus-

sion by individuals representing all facets of the city and county communities—not only urban and rural, but women and men, private businesses and non-profits, old and young, different races and socio-economic levels—in short, a group with diversity in the broadest sense.

Once this group would be assembled, the position statement outlines the tasks they would take on, with the goal of bringing to the citizens of Salina and all of Saline County a recommendation for the future of their government.

The committee—made up of David Norlin, chair, Jan Mendell, Ann Zimmerman, Ted & Marge Mintun, and John Divine, with help early on from Carmen Wilson and Mary Kerstetter—looks forward to final discussion and vote on the consolidation issue at the May 6 Annual Meeting.

The proposed position statement is printed here.

—Ann Zimmerman

### THE LWV OF SALINA SUPPORTS:

- 1) Establishment of a joint commission/task force from the city and the county to:
  - a) look at the consolidation issue,
  - b) explore its advantages and disadvantages, and
  - c) bring a recommendation before the citizens.
- 2) A balance of representation on the commission/task force among all facets of the community, including but not limited to the following:
  - a) Geography (city/county, urban/rural).
  - b) Genders.
  - c) Socio/economic levels.
  - d) Public, private, & non-profit sectors.
  - e) Races and ethnicities.
  - f) Disabilities.
  - g) Age groups.
- 3) Completion of the work of the commission/task force within 12 months.

### THE LWV OF SALINA RECOMMENDS THAT THE COMMISSION / TASK FORCE:

- 1) Listen to all sides and foster respect among all participants.
- 2) Gather input (information, opinions, recommendations) from all segments of the city-county community, by:
  - a) Holding public meetings across the county.
  - b) Surveying citizens using various formats, such as printed materials, electronic media and telephone.
- 3) Gather input from outside the county related to consolidation.
- 4) Examine the issues of consolidation, including but not limited to:
  - a) The structure of a unified government.
  - b) The role of elected officials in such a government.
  - c) Land use and zoning rules.
  - d) Property tax issues.
  - e) Allocation of existing city and county debt.
  - f) Inclusion of other local governmental units.
  - g) Effects on employees and job classifications.
  - h) Overall economic impact of consolidation.

## OBSERVERS SWAP INFO

Kaye Crawford, Observer Chair, convened the yearly meeting of all League observers over coffee at Capers on Saturday morning, March 4.

Observers are a longstanding tradition of the League of Women Voters. Observers attend regular meetings of public bodies—commissions, authorities, governing boards, etc.—simply to observe. They do not participate in discussions, but they keep track of the business conducted and bring back to the League any important information.

Observers attending the Capers meeting were Emma Doherty (Health Dept and Solid Waste), LaVelle Frick (Salina Planning Commission), Ted Mintun (Community Corrections) and Bill Powell (Airport Authority). Non-observers included Marge Mintun, Mary Anne Powell, and Abner Perney. Observers who were absent: Jan Mendell (Central Kansas Mental Health Center – CKMHC), Carmen Wilson (City Commission) and Mike Wilson (School Board and Library Board). Observers made the following reports:

**Community Corrections (CCI)** this year received an improved benefit package from the county, which threw CCI over its budget and led to the loss of two staff members and inability to afford to pay St. Francis for intake services, increasing the workload on remaining employees. Grant applications brought in enough money to hire one additional person. A new treatment program for minor drug offenders has had a very low recidivism rate. A collaboration between CCI and CKMHC now offers group sessions with adult offenders. CCI has a new emphasis on locating adults who “disappear” (drop

out of treatment) so they can finish their treatment.

**Airport Authority**, supported by property leases and city and county taxes, has 80 businesses with 4000 employees and \$128,000,000 payroll, and also includes K-State Salina’s flight and airplane maintenance school. All available buildings are filled or leased. New parking is planned. Of the nine airports in its class, Salina has the highest fuel flow and second highest number of operations. The Global Flier is staying there until it goes to the Smithsonian Museum. Groundwater pollution under the airport area is a current issue, much-discussed in local media.

**Salina Planning Commission** has considered several housing developments south and east of Salina. The Ohio Street overpass is a topic of discussion, including artwork, landscaping, parking and irrigation. Other important projects are North Broadway from West North Street to North Ninth Street and east from there to the intersection of Pacific and Santa Fe; soccer fields; traffic signals downtown; Hageman pedestrian overpass; and wayfinding signage.

**City-County Health Department** has been the subject of a study paid for by city and county to determine how services to the region could be improved.

**Solid Waste Management Committee** continues to offer its mulching-mower rebate program. Curbside Recycling is going well. The committee is working to establish goals for itself.

## Cinco de Mayo

On Friday, the 5<sup>th</sup> (cinco) of May (Mayo), *El Comité Orgullo Hispano de Salina* (The Hispanic Pride Committee of Salina) will celebrate the “Cinco de Mayo.” Ms Melinda Lewis, Director of Policy Advocacy and Research, from El Centro, Inc., Kansas City, will be in Salina to discuss immigration issues and how they affect us all. Her issues will include:

- Proposals for immigration reform in Congress.
- The “Real ID Act” and what it means for Kansas.
- State issues affecting immigrants.

The program, which runs from 9am to Noon, will include a 30-minute film, “Dying to Live: A Migrant’s Journey,” a film designed to open minds and hearts.

Ms. Lewis’s efforts are focused on coordinating policy advocacy, research, and leadership development efforts and building statewide networks for progressive policy change, particularly around issues of affordable housing, working families, and immigrant inclusion. She serves on several community coalitions and directs local voter registration and mobilization efforts in the Latino community and serves on several national committees.

The event takes place at Heartland Programs, 700 Jupiter, multipurpose room. Ms. Lewis will repeat her workshop at 6:00 p.m.--in Spanish--at the same location.

Please RSVP as soon as possible to Maribel Panuco at Catholic Charities, 827-4517, or [mpanuco@salhelp.org](mailto:mpanuco@salhelp.org).

—Dina Girón

## **NEW WOMEN JUDGES in Saline/Ottawa Counties**

**For the first time in history, the 28th Judicial District (Saline and Ottawa Counties) has a women judge—in fact, it has two!**

Over the past few months, two judicial positions came open and both were filled with local women.

Honorable Rene Young, District Court Judge, partnered for many years in Denning & Young with Gary Denning, practicing law in a wide variety of civil and criminal cases. Nursing was Young's first career. She was appointed to the judicial position which opened with the removal of District Judge George Robertson.

Honorable Mary Thrower, Magistrate Judge, spent several years as Assistant Saline County Attorney and before that worked on juvenile cases in Colorado. She was a court services officer prior to becoming a lawyer, and she grew up in Ottawa County.

The women of the late eighteen and early nineteen hundreds who worked so hard to gain for women the right to vote would surely be cheering now. Those early women's activists had worked for 80 years to win voting rights in 1920. And now, more than 80 years after that, women in the twenty-eighth judicial district have achieved judgeships.

These two women join Salina's Municipal Judge Brenda Stoss in providing gender diversity in our courtrooms.

The Salina League of Women Voters welcomes Judge Young and Judge Thrower to their positions on the bench.

## **AROUND THE STATE: Kenyans Visit Wichita!**

Out of the more than 840 local Leagues, Wichita, Kansas, and Tucson, Arizona, were chosen as destinations for Kenyan women visiting the U. S. as part of a new international program of the LWVUS.

Last October, the League of Women Voters in Washington, DC, announced a new exchange program between League members and women from the African nation of Kenya. The initiative is called "Kenyans Working Together for Good Governance: Civil Society, Government and Members of Parliament." It aims to strengthen accountability and openness in Kenyan government.

Wichita and Tucson were selected to give the Kenyans a chance to view American life outside the beltway. They visited Wichita in early April.

We don't have the latest news from our Wichita League on how the visits went, but the plan was for the African women to stay in the homes of Wichita League members for several days, and to visit local government and courts and take a trip to Topeka to view the state legislature and meet with officials.

"This program exemplifies the League's continuing dedication to promoting democratic values globally," said Kay J. Maxwell, President of the League of Women Voters. "We firmly believe that citizens of all countries need to be informed and active in government, and that all governments should be open and accessible to their citizens."

The Leagues are working with the Kenyans to develop concrete skills and tools for good governance. Participants will learn to develop efficient policies at

the local level, to advocate for accountability and transparency, and to promote effective working relationships between the government and civil society organizations.

The League is partnering with the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) for this two-year initiative. The League of Women Voters Education Fund receives funding for this effort from the U.S. State Department. In April 2006, eight Kenyans stayed with local Leagues around the country—three stayed in Wichita—to learn firsthand about the United States' government, culture, and participatory democracy.

In coming months, League members will then travel to Kenya, where they will work to foster dialogue with the Kenyan participants, members of civil society, local elected officials and other activists about the importance of accountability and government openness.

The Kenyan program is just one of many current and past League efforts promoting democracy around the world—in places such as Seoul, South Korea; Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; Russia; Brazil; Paraguay; Jamaica; Chile; Mexico; Malawi and Zimbabwe.

## National Issue: AIR QUALITY

### AIR QUALITY STANDARDS

#### For Particulate Matter

**On April 15, 2006, the League of Women Voters of the U.S., along with 16 other national organizations and 143 state, regional and local groups, sent a letter (condensed here) to Stephen Johnson, Administrator of the EPA.**

We are writing to express our grave concern with proposed revisions to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for fine and coarse particulate matter (PM). The Clean Air Act requires that primary standards protect public health, including the health of sensitive populations, with an adequate margin of safety. Secondary standards must protect public welfare, including important adverse effects such as visibility impairment and damage to materials and crops. The proposed standards fail on both counts.

The serious adverse health effects of particulate matter have been well documented in EPA's Criteria Document and Staff Paper. The thousands of studies published over the last nine years make a much stronger case for the regulation of fine particles than in 1997, and indicate that the current standards must be lowered to protect public health.

Studies have consistently associated daily increases in fine particles with decreased lung function, worsening of asthma, more frequent emergency department visits, increased risk of heart attacks and strokes, additional hospital admissions, and increased number of daily deaths.

in

concentrations of "PM2.5" are well below the current standard and rarely reach the level of the proposed 24-hour standard. Lives may be shortened by one to three years.

EPA's risk assessment demonstrates that thousands of premature deaths attributable to particulate air pollution are occurring each year under the current standard.

The largest-ever epidemiological study of the effects of PM2.5 in 204 U.S. counties was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in March 2006.

This study showed clearly that the proposed standards for PM2.5 fail to protect public health as required by the Clean Air Act. At levels *below* what EPA proposes as an annual standard, the findings showed cardiovascular and respiratory hospital admissions for the elderly increasing as concentrations of PM2.5 increased.

A follow-up to the Harvard Six Cities Study published in March 2006 found that an average of three percent fewer people died for every unit of reduction in the annual average levels of PM2.5.

According to EPA's own Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee, the proposed annual PM2.5 standard does not provide the required adequate margin of safety to protect infants and children.

These effects have been demonstrated in cities where the daily con-

The Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee to the EPA has indicated that PM2.5 causes premature death at annual concentrations below the current standard, and has repeated its call for lowering the annual standard.

EPA proposes a daily coarse particle standard that would be higher than levels where serious health effects have been reported.

EPA would enforce the new standard only in urban areas with populations above 100,000, and exempt mining and agricultural sources of particles.

Our organizations strongly support lowering both the annual average and the 24-hour standard, while tightening the way compliance with the standards is measured. We urge you to adopt protective standards that will apply nationwide, monitoring both urban and rural areas, and without exemptions for agribusiness and mining.

In addition, we believe that EPA must establish secondary standards that protect against deterioration of visibility and ecosystem damage.

The decision over the air quality standards for fine and coarse particulate matter is the most far-reaching environmental health decision you will make this year. We urge you to strengthen the proposed standards, consistent with the law and the science. *[full text & footnotes at [lwv.org](http://lwv.org).]*

### **QUICK FACTS ON BOTTLED WATER**

✓ Global consumption of bottled water reached 41 billion gallons in 2004, up 57% from 1999.

✓ The U.S. is the world's leading consumer of bottled water—about one 8oz. Glass per person per day.

✓ Bottled water costs up to 10,000 times more than tap water.

✓ Tap water is distributed through an energy efficient infrastructure; bottled water generally arrives in a diesel-fueled truck.

✓ 1.5 billion barrels of oil are consumed each year to produce the plastic for water bottles, enough to fuel 100,000 cars.

✓ Empty, the plastic bottle becomes trash or litter; about 14% are recycled; these are sometimes sent to China; landfilled bottles take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade.

✓ Water extraction for bottled water has caused water shortages in Texas and the Great Lakes where farmers, fishers and others suffer from dropping water tables.

✓ The U.S. EPA sets more stringent quality standards for tap water than the FDA

does for bottled beverages; roughly 40% of bottled water is actually just tap water.

✓ Over a billion people in the world lack good water. The United Nations estimates that if the world took half of what it currently spends on bottled water (\$100 billion annually) and invested it in water infrastructure and treatment, everyone in the world could have access to clean drinking water.

*[Information from: Organic Consumers News 10 Feb 2006; Earth Policy News, Spring 2006, of Great Plains Earth Institute Grass Roots; and Recycling in Kansas Newsletter, Apr.-May-Jun. 2006.]*

## National Issue: NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT

On March 23, 2006, Kay J. Maxwell, LWVUS president, sent a letter (condensed here) to Paul DeGregorio, US Election Assistance Commission chair, expressing the League's concerns about state implementation of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

We are writing to express our concerns about implementation of the National Voter Registration Act in the states. We are particularly concerned about restrictions on voter registration and about failures to implement agency-based registration. The League of Women Voters urges the EAC to act, pursuant to its responsibilities under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), to protect voters against measures that undermine voter participation.

To increase the number of eligible citizens who register to vote in elections for Federal office, and to overcome discriminatory and unfair registration laws and procedures that disproportionately harm voter participation by various groups, including racial minorities, NVRA provides for voter registration by mail and through designated agencies, in addition to registration through departments of motor vehicles.

Unfortunately, a variety of actions by states are undermining accessible voter registration, national standards, and broad use of uniform mail voter registration forms. The League of Women Voters asks the EAC to ensure the following principles:

**1) States must accept and use the mail voter registration application form developed by the EAC.**

We understand that some state and local officials may be encouraging the use of state forms and discouraging the use of the EAC-developed form. We believe this undermines the use of the federal form. Any discrimination against the use of that form must be remedied. The option of which form to use lies with the applicant.

**2) State mail voter registration application forms for federal elections cannot be more restrictive than the form developed by the EAC.**

The NVRA allows a state to develop and use a mail registration form for federal elections but only if that form meets the criteria set forth in the NVRA. A state form may not include additional requirements for the voter beyond those for the EAC-developed form.

The first criterion limits the form to "information," precluding, for example, a requirement to provide ID accompanying the mail registration form.

The second criterion bars any requirement for notarization or other formal authentication, requirements which some state had prior to enactment of the NVRA. In adopting the NVRA, Congress considered whether registration by mail would make voting fraud easier and determined that the NVRA provided adequate safeguards. Congress expressly rejected a proposed amendment that would have allowed states to require proof of citizenship for voter registration.

**3) State requirements that burden the acceptance and use of mail registration forms are inconsistent with the NVRA.**

Some states are enacting a variety of limitations on the acceptance and use of state or federal forms. This is not consistent with the NVRA. In addition to the ID rules already mentioned, registration and training requirements are being adopted for those engaged in organized voter registration programs. Some states are limiting

how many forms are available and passing burdensome record-keeping requirements. Very short time periods for the transmittal of registration forms are being set. Harsh penalties are backing these rules.

If states believe abuses exist in the voter registration process, they should act against such abuses. But adding new requirements to the mail voter registration form, or limiting its acceptance and use, cannot be a proxy for preventing abuse.

**4) States should provide for broad dissemination of the mail voter registration form developed by the EAC and encourage its use.**

The NVRA requires states to provide the mail voter registration form to organized voter registration programs. Some states are not following this requirement.

Congress contemplated broad use of federal mail voter registration forms. States and localities must provide for this and must not rely only on a state form.

### Agency Registration

The League of Women Voters is also deeply concerned about the failure of "agency registration." Voter registration rates from public assistance and disability agencies suggest that most states simply are not following the law, which requires such agencies to provide forms to applicants and assistance in completing them, and to accept completed applications for transmittal to the State election official.

The EAC is required provide information to the states with respect to their responsibilities under NVRA. We urge the EAC to give this issue close attention. HAVA provides powers that could also be brought to bear on this problem. We particularly urge the EAC to conduct outreach to encourage compliance with the law.

In conclusion, we ask the EAC to remedy restrictions on voter registration and failures to implement agency-based voter registration. *[full text and citations at lww.org]*

**League of Women Voters of Salina**

PO Box 502

Salina, KS 67402-0502

**JOIN US**

**JOIN IN THE ACTION by becoming a member of the League of Women Voters of Salina or renewing your League Membership. There has never been a better time to join the League. Please take a moment now to become a member.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Yes, I want to add my voice to yours by joining the League at the following level:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Single Membership (circle one)
  - Contributing Level* \$50.00
  - Sustaining Level* \$40.00
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership (circle one)
  - Contributing Level* \$75.00
  - Sustaining Level* \$60.00
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student/supported or other \$20.00

\_\_\_\_\_ **I am unable to join the League at this time, but enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.**

For more information, please contact:

**Mary Anne Powell, Membership Chairperson**  
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**Telephone: 823-8041 Email: wbpowell@ksu.edu**

*Make checks payable to: **The League of Women Voters of Salina**, and mail to **PO Box 502, Salina, KS 67402-0502.***