



THE WEST VIRGINIA VOTER

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LWV WV Library Study

By Carolyn Watson

At the 2013 state Convention, the LWV of WV voted to study the funding of libraries in West Virginia. As part of that effort, Betty Barrett and Carolyn Watson attended the West Virginia Library Association Annual Conference in Shepherdstown the week of Oct. 9-11. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet with the WVLA Legislative Committee Meeting, Karen Goff, Secretary of the WV Library Commission, and librarians from across the state. All are concerned with providing stable, consistent, and sufficient funding for public libraries in West Virginia.

The key to such funding appears to be the local tax matching funds required to receive state grants in aid. These funds are provided locally by a variety of sources – the local school boards, county commissions, and municipalities or a combination of all three. Additionally, some libraries have levies. These have to be approved every 3 or 5 years by their citizenry and are not a dependable source as they hinge on fluctuations in the local economies.

Local funding is a patchwork, and in many cases, unstable. A major recent example is the WV Supreme Court decision that Kanawha County's method of funding from the Board of Education (BOE) is unconstitutional, removing about \$3 million from that library system. Eight other counties had similar laws not invalidated. Each BOE may voluntarily continue such funding, and in most cases, they have, but this depends on BOE decisions, not laws. In addition, there are a few counties that have special laws not affected by the recent decision. Other counties have no levies at all.

The Library Funding Study Committee has concluded most of the discovery portion of the study. Currently the committee is examining ways this system can be improved to provide stable, consistent and sufficient funding for public libraries. Betty has completed a glossary and Carolyn and Betty are working on questions for the study.

The committee will be compiling a report on our research covering these and other issues, as well as developing questions to be answered in consensus meetings. These will be submitted to the state board of LWV for their approval. We will keep you informed as the process moves forward.

Notes from the President

By Nancy Novak

Yes, the League is all about providing candidate information and registering voters. But in this year with few elections in our state, West Virginia's four local leagues are finding fascinating ways to keep busy and to provide information to citizens. Each plans its own program, and they are as diverse as their regions of the state. Here is the news from our local leagues.

JEFFERSON COUNTY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The Jefferson County league has a new president, Debbie Royalty, who is doing a terrific job at helping their board get more structured. In October the board voted to give their Community Service Award for 2014 to Hospice of the Panhandle. They developed a service award to honor a worthy recipient in their community, and this has the added benefit of generating some good publicity for their league.

The need for additional addiction treatment in the Eastern Panhandle was the focus of a recent league forum in Jefferson County. The league board has stated their support for the grant application of East Ridge Health systems to establish a Women's Treatment and Recovery Program.

HUNTINGTON AREA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The Huntington League has held two meetings lately focusing on children and poverty in West Virginia. The first was a screening of "A Place at the Table," a documentary film that shows how hunger poses serious economic, social, and cultural implications for the United States, and what solutions are possible. As of 2012, about 50 million Americans were food insecure.

Following up on the film, they invited West Virginia Senator Bob Plymale, a member of the Senate Joint Committee on Children and Poverty, to be the speaker at their October meeting. Census data shows that one in four West Virginia children lives below the federal poverty line -- \$23,550 for a family of four. Eighteen ideas have been presented to the Committee for Legislative consideration.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

By Helen Gibbins

BIRTHPLACE OF RIVERS NATIONAL MONUMENT

At its September meeting the LWVWV's board voted to support the establishment of the "Birthplace of Rivers National Monument". If enacted the national monument would include 123,000 acres in the Monongahela National Forest. The headwaters of six streams – Cranberry, Williams, Cherry, Greenbrier, Gauley, and Elk – rise from West Virginia's Mon Forest. In addition many scenic areas are located in the proposed national monument area.

Because the proposed Monument is within the US Forest boundaries, it will not take private lands. Those who are concerned about the costs of the Monument can be assured that it will not be expensive because facilities such as trails, campgrounds, and visitors' centers are already there. The current Forest plan allows for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities so they can continue. Ecosystem restoration and management by the WVDNR to improve fish and game habitat would continue. National Monument designation does not include the strictures of Wilderness requirements. But at present it is envisioned that the national monument plans will not allow oil and gas development on lands with federally owned mineral rights.

The National Monument would also protect its designated area from potential changes enacted by Congress. The House of Representatives voted for two bills that could affect the special characteristics of the proposed monument. HR 761 promotes mineral extraction in public lands; HR 1526 mandates increases in timber cuts on all National Forests. (See the October *Highlands Voice* for more information.)

The National Monument designation will boost West Virginia's reputation as a state full of scenic and recreational attributes. It would be another step in promoting the economic values of tourism. As the plan is developed there will be opportunities for all of us to make an input on how the Monument will be defined.

Designation of a National Monument takes action by either the US President or Congress. You can become involved in the process by contacting President Obama and our members of Congress asking them to move forward on the "Birthplace of National Rivers National Monument." More information is available at www.birthplaceofrivers.org

REMOVE WV'S PRIMACY FOR ENFORCING SURFACE MINING LAWS

The LWVWV joined a number of organizations in sending a formal administrative law petition asking the US Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement to take away WV's primacy for enforcing the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) written to protect WV's residents and natural resources from harmful effects of surface mining. The 95-page letter states that over 30 years WV has consistently neglected to enforce the mandates of SMCRA and cites the deficiencies of WV's program. Mining operations in WV have been cited for at least 6,301 SMCRA violations since 2006.

Many more violations have been ignored and un-enforced. (See Coal River Mountain Watch's website.)

The other organizations that signed on to the letter - Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), WV Highlands Conservancy, WV Rivers Coalition, Keepers of the Mountain Foundation, Mountain Heritage and Health Association, Christians for the Mountains, Catholic Committee of Appalachia, Appalachian Catholic Worker, National Wildlife Federation, Center for Biological Diversity.

If you wish to sign the petition as individuals, to the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition website www.ohvec.org. Under "Featured Petitions", click CARE: Citizen Action for Real Enforcement".

WV'S TRIENNIAL REVIEW OF WV'S WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

The LWVWV signed on with other organizations to comments on the WV's Triennial Review. For more information, contact Helen Gibbins, gibbins@frontier.com.

AGRICULTURE STUDY/CONSENSUS

The LWVUS is preparing a study/consensus to update its position on Agriculture. Study materials and consensus questions developed by the national study committee will be available later in the fall, 2013 although there are some suggested readings on the LWVUS website. The Agriculture Update will focus narrowly on: 1) current technology issues in agriculture including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), herbicides, pesticides, agriculture water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock, and accurate food labeling; and 2) current agriculture finance issues including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop subsidies and the federal agricultural regulatory process. Dates for local Leagues to schedule study/consensus meetings will be from January - April 1. Watch for more information on the LWV US website, www.lwv.org.

Calendar

| | |
|-------------|---|
| November 16 | LWV WV Board meeting |
| January 8 | Regular session of legislature begins |
| January 11 | LWV WV Board meeting |
| March 8 | Regular session of legislature adjourns |
| April 13-19 | National Library Week |

WV's EDUCATION REPORT

By Priscilla Haden

“SOME WV SCHOOLS SHOW IMPROVEMENT Nearly 40 percent of students progressing; data first look at system”

The Charleston Daily Mail September 5 2013

“LESS THAN 50% OF STUDENTS HIT MATH, READING MARKS”

The Charleston Gazette September 5 2013

In 2013 West Virginia received a waiver from the United States Department of Education that freed the state from certain requirements of the “No Left Behind Act”. This waiver allows the state to use our own plans to prepare students and improve teaching instead of adhering to the requirements included in No Child Left Behind Act. Primarily, the No Child Left Behind legislation required that school teachers, principals, county school systems, and students would show student growth to indicate how our school system and each student are doing.

West Virginia's Office of Educational Performance Audits was challenged to change focus with a new accountability system. Under the new system, schools are rated and designated as a Success, Transition, Focus, Support, or Priority school. Consideration was still given to the No Child Left Behind groupings that considered socioeconomic, African American lineage, and special education. Attendance and graduation rates are also put into play.

Success schools are defined as meeting academic goals in Math and Language Arts. Transition schools are those where the majority of students have met goals in English Language Arts and Math. A focus or support school is where a majority of the students had not met annual academic goals. Priority schools are those that are consistently among the lowest performing in the state. There are 31 schools in this category.

The 2014-2015 school year will add other challenges as West Virginia Schools will be compared to other schools in the nation. Common core standards have been established and a new Westest will be administered, ACT WV. The ACT is a college and career readiness test. Sixty eight percent of West Virginia students took the ACT. A student's score on the test often determines entrance to a college. The four subjects tested are English, Reading, Math and Science.

| | Average composite score | English | Reading | Math | Science |
|---------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|------|---------|
| West Virginia | 20.6 | 70 | 53 | 33 | 25 |
| National | 21.1 | 67 | 52 | 46 | 31 |

(continued from page 1)

MORGANTOWN-MONONGALIA COUNTY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

In October the Morgantown League held a meeting for members and the public to learn about their public library, with speaker Sharon Turner, Director of the Morgantown Public Library. Funding for the library is an important local issue, since both the County Commission and the City Council recently cut funding to the library. Information gathered at our membership meeting will help with the State League's Library study.

Coming up for the Morgantown League in November is a public meeting on their County Government.

WOOD COUNTY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The Wood County league held a recent public meeting on the Affordable Care Act, with guest speaker Lisa Diehl of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care. This is a part of the league's work to increase public understanding of major public policy issues.

Upcoming programs for the Wood County league include a speaker on West Virginia's proposed mineral trust fund, “The Future Fund.” With its heavy reliance on natural resources for revenue, our state is one of the least economically diverse states in the nation. Eventually coal and gas resources will be exhausted and/or replaced by cleaner energy sources. The meeting will ask whether it is time for policymakers to consider establishing a permanent mineral trust fund in West Virginia. The league does not have a position on the Future Fund, but is providing a forum for public information.

Teresa Koon
Editor



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JOIN THE LEAGUE! The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. **If you live in Cabell, Jefferson, Monongalia, or Wood County, please contact the local League in those counties.** To join at the state level, send a check or money order payable to LWVWV to: Teresa Koon, Treasurer, LWVWV, 4112 Coopers Creek Rd., Charleston WV 25312. Dues are \$40 for individuals, \$60 for a household, and \$20 for students. Because we are a lobbying organization, membership dues are not tax-deductible.

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