



The Voter

League of Women Voters of Arapahoe
And Douglas Counties

February 2015

Membership 103

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In addition to the valentine hoopla, February 14 marks the 95th birthday of the League of Woman Voters. Started six months before women gained the right to vote by Carrie Chapman Catt, her early efforts still guide us today. Initially designed to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters, Catt called the League “a mighty experiment.” And mighty it has become. So on February 14, forgo the roses and candy for a minute and raise your glass in honor of Catt and the 95th birthday of the League of Women Voters.

Monday, February 2, 2015
Groundhog Day

Thursday, February 5, 2015
Unit Meeting: Common Core
5:30 p.m.@ Mimi’s Restaurant
205 S. Abilene, Aurora

Friday, February 6, 2015
Great Decisions Discussion
“India Changes Course”
9:30 a.m.@ Castlewood Library
6739 S. Uinta St., Centennial

Wednesday, February 11, 2015
LWVADC Administrative Team
9:30 a.m.@ Deb Armbruster’s
7719 S. Glencoe Way
Centennial

Thursday, February 12, 2015
Unit Meeting: Common Core
9:30 a.m.@ Castlewood Library
6739 S. Uinta St., Centennial

Great Decisions
Every Friday, February 13 -
March 7, 2015

Monday, February 16, 2015
President’s Day

Monday, February 23, 2015
LWVADC Management Team
Meeting
6:30 p.m.@Castlewood Library
6739 S. Uinta St., Centennial

URBAN RENEWAL FORUM

At the January 3rd Management Team retreat members voted to sponsor a public forum about Littleton’s special Urban Renewal election, March 3rd, 2015. The forum was designed to highlight the efforts of two groups who have submitted ballot issues concerning the city’s Urban Renewal program. One ballot issue sponsored by the *Your Littleton, Your Voice* group would require voter approval for each type of urban renewal program; a ballot issue sponsored by the *Littleton Strong* group would not require voter approval but would limit the city’s use of eminent domain or condemnation unless requested by the property owner.

A forum date was set for February 12, but after agreeing to participate, the *Your Littleton, Your Vote* group declined to participate. The forum has been cancelled.

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

THE COMMON CORE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS



Evie Hudak

WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ??

The Common Core standards are a new set of academic standards. The standards are meant to prepare students for college and careers and to make the U.S. more competitive academically. They describe what students, no matter where they live, need to learn, by the end of a school year. Forty-three states, including Colorado, have adopted these standards.

The National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers led the effort to draft the new standards.

The federal government did not write the standards but has promoted them through grants to the states. The standards are praised by such diverse groups as the Republican Governor's Association, US Chamber of Commerce, Choice Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, National Governor's Association, American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

Opposition to the standards comes from conservative political groups and many parents throughout the U.S. Their concerns include the impacts of standardization, mandatory student testing and fear of excessive federal government involvement in education. As of 2014, three states, Indiana, Oklahoma and South Carolina, have withdrawn their adoption of the Common Core State Standards. In Colorado, the State Board of Education recently voted to eliminate the assessments that evaluate how schools are progressing toward meeting the standards. Initial reactions are that the board had no legal authority to do that. Colorado legislators are also looking at recommendations from a task force to reduce state mandated student tests. Whether this will pertain to Common Core or not, is not known at this point.

At our February unit meetings we'll learn more about the Common Core Standards, the pros and cons, the questions and concerns. Former State Senator Evie Hudak, will be our featured speaker at the Aurora and Castlewood February units as listed on the front page of this newsletter. The regular Monday evening unit will not be held in February so please plan to attend the other two units.

Senator Hudak served as chair of the Senate Education Committee and as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. She also represented the Senate in various other organizations and groups, including the Education Commission of the States, the Education Leader's Council and the National Conference of State Legislators. She is also a former teacher with two decades of experience at the K-12 and college levels and served for several years as the state director of the School Readiness Quality Improvement Program. In addition to her other community efforts, she currently serves on a couple of committees of the League of Women Voters of Jefferson County.

MARCH PREVIEW

GENERAL LEAGUE MEETING ON SPECIAL DISTRICTS

You've seen them listed on your property tax bills and noted the amount you pay for their services. Special Districts - something you know exists, you pay taxes to, but who are they, what services do they provide and who's in charge?



By definition a special district is a political subdivision established to provide a single public service (such as a water supply or sanitation) within a specific geographical area. They are also independent units that exist as separate entities with substantial administration and fiscal independence from general purpose local governments.

Want to know more? Attend our General Membership meeting on March 24, at 6:30 p.m. at Southglenn Library in the Streets of Southglenn. Special speaker will be Ann Terry, Executive Director for the Special District Association of Colorado. Ms. Terry will explain how special districts operate, who's in charge, their administrative functions and the features that set them apart from local government.

MEMBERSHIP BRIEFINGS

To all the new members and those who have renewed their membership in the League of Women Voters of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. Thank you so very, very much.

Our membership count as of January 31, 2015 is 103 paid members.

We also want to thank the anonymous donor who so graciously volunteered to underwrite \$35 of the \$60 fee for any new member who joined our League during August through December 31, 2014. We gained 23 new individual memberships and four members from two household memberships. What an amazing way to donate \$850.

And last, but certainly not least we want to issue a BIG WELCOME to two new members: Marilyn Fiske from Greenwood Village and Judith Parks from Highlands Ranch.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

LWVCO LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

It was only the third day of the Colorado legislative session when League members arrived for the LWVCO Legislative Conference, January 12, 2015. Unopened boxes were stacked in various offices and the newly elected legislators were still finding their way around the state capital. Nevertheless LWV members attending the conference were rewarded with a dearth of information. Highlights included:



An explanation of the Tabor Amendment, its major provisions, the tabor rebates and the need to change the system by Carol Hedges of the Colorado Fiscal Institute. One of the more vexing items in the amendment is the provision that if state revenues exceed a voter approved cap the Colorado Constitution requires the money to be refunded to the taxpayers. Ms. Hedges and many other believe this needs to be changed to allow the money to be spent on education, transportation and other governmental services that were hit by the Last recession. Carol is also willing to speak to League groups about this issue.

A welcome by Dicky Lee Hullinghorst, State House speaker and Brian Del Grosso, minority House leader. Their legislative priorities this year include education, restoring cuts made to services during the recession and economic benefits for the middle class.



An explanation of the draft of Colorado's new Water Plan presented by James Eckland from the Colorado Water Conservation Board. Following a public comment period this year, the final proposal is expected to be submitted to the Governor in December 2015. To read the executive summary go to www.coloradowaterplan.com or contact cowaterplan@state.co.us

A report on the oil and gas development in Colorado by Cathy Proctor, energy reporter for the Denver Business Journal. Some tidbits: Colorado is number 2 in the nation for oil and gas development and ground zero for protests against fracking. It is estimated that the lower oil prices are causing oil and gas companies to lose \$6 billion per day. Governor Hickenlooper's Oil and Gas Task Force developed to present recommendations to help oil and gas operations reach accord with local communities have until February 28 to reach consensus.



The afternoon luncheon session featured LWVCO Communications Director, Sonya Kettering, explaining the state League's involvement with the public news service, and LWVCO lobbyist, Christine Watson, giving an overview what may happen in the 2015 Colorado Legislative session.

GREAT DECISIONS CALENDAR



The Great Decisions Program beginning Friday, 6, 2015 will run every Friday for eight weeks at either the Castlewood or Southglenn Libraries.

The program is free and open to all. If there's a topic that appeals to you just drop in. Here's an outline of the dates, topics, times and locations.

Friday, February 6, 2015
India Changes Course
9:30 a.m. @ Castlewood Library

Friday, February 13, 2015
Syria Refugee Crisis
9:30 a.m. @ Castlewood Library

Friday, February 20, 2015
U.S. Policy Towards Africa
10 a.m. @ Southglenn Library

Friday, February 27, 2015
Human Trafficking in the 21st Century
9:30 a.m. @ Castlewood Library

Friday, March 6, 2015
Russia and the Near Abroad
10 a.m. @ Southglenn Library

Friday, March 13, 2015
Brazil's Metamorphosis
9:30 a.m. @ Castlewood Library

Friday, March 20, 2015
Privacy in the Digital Age
9:30 a.m. @ Castlewood Library

Friday, March 27, 2015
Sectarianism in the Middle East
9:30 a.m. @ Castlewood Library

Information: Monique Hea, 303-220-9273
heamph@hotmail.com or Vicki Harimon,
303-770-8738 vickiharimon@aol.com

LWVADC WATER COMMITTEE

The Committee plans to prepare a Water 101 program for the May unit meetings with a subsequent program in the 2015-16 program year on the Colorado Water Plan and how the Plan will affect us.



May meeting topics will include key water definitions, an overview of the Colorado Water Plan, Douglas County water issues and history, and water resources.

LWVADC OIL & GAS COMMITTEE

A recent meeting with Diane Kocis, Arapahoe County Oil & Gas Specialist, revealed the following for Arapahoe and Douglas Counties members.

- ▶ Oil and gas drilling has ground to a halt in Arapahoe County. Conoco will not be drilling in 2015, but will submit three additional permit applications in the next few weeks because they anticipate drilling in 2016.
- ▶ The latest consensus is that oil will continue to drop and prices will stay low for a significant part of 2015. Operators have not shut their wells yet, but if oil prices drop further it is likely low producing wells will be shut.
- ▶ Colorado is ahead of the county regarding methane regulations, but the regulations don't cover all and will be slow to implement.
- ▶ Severance taxes in Colorado are paid to the county or municipality where the oil and gas well workers reside. If, for example, most of the work force resides in Aurora, Aurora will receive the tax revenues.



LWVADC PROGRAM PLANNING REPORT

Thanks to all who participated in the annual January program planning sessions. There was much to be discussed as we debated whether to adopt proposals from member Leagues concerning fracking, behavioral health and voting methods.

- ▶ LWVADC members supported retaining all state positions but suggested LWVCO review the Precinct Caucus/Assembly System position in light of proposals to consider various types of primary election methods.
- ▶ Members supported retaining all local positions with the understanding that these positions would have to be reviewed for applicability to Douglas County. It was also suggested that we check out our special education position to see if our positions correspond with any subsequent revisions to the *Individuals with Disability Education Act of 2004*.
- ▶ Members also supported a study to update the LWVCO Health Care position to include behavioral health.
- ▶ We did not have consensus on the fracking study proposal. Some members believed the study was not needed as we already had positions that allowed us to speak to the suggested new study. Others felt we needed more information before they could commit to a new study. A minority favored a study as the issue of fracking is very important to Colorado.
- ▶ Members did not support the proposed voting methods study.
- ▶ A Boulder LWV study request to consider wages was not discussed as it arrived after our study meetings.



**PROGRAM
REVIEW**

Additional suggestions for LWVADC program meetings included revisions to our special education position to include gifted and talented children, host an informational public meeting on the Transpacific Trade Agreement, hold unit meetings on human trafficking, study the option for local governments to opt out of state broadband limitations and hold an informational meeting to help people determine who owns their property's mineral rights

This report, minus the suggestions for local programs, was sent to the LWVCO Program Director. The state board will consider reports from all other Colorado local leagues and report the results at their state convention in May.

LWVADC MANAGEMENT TEAM NOTES

This is a compilation of the January 3rd Management Team retreat and the January 26, Management Team minutes: The Administration Committee will develop a new set of LWVADV policies and procedures; a committee was set up to explore new ways to provide Voter Services in 2016; members will receive a survey re meeting locations and time; Gladys Hodges was welcomed as a new Management Team member; the water and oil & gas committee reports, and the program planning results were reviewed; draft bylaws for the LWVADC were distributed, and talking points to introduce LWVADC to Douglas County officials and the media were discussed.



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Mission

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Join Us

Join the League to help make your community a strong safe and vibrant place to live. Help shape the important issues that affect you and your family.

Memberships are \$60 per individual; \$85 for households and \$25 for students. For more information call Jo Ann Feder, 904-608-3932, jolvs10s@gmail.com

League Links

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