



Stillwater Voter

A Publication of Stillwater League of Women Voters

Trish Emig, President

January/February 2008

Marlee Pierce, Editor
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President's Message

When I'm feeling so low in energy, I'm reminded of Shirley Week's com-

ment regarding checking her e-mail. Shirley said something like, "Sometimes I just don't want to check my e-mail because there might be

something important that I'll feel like I should do, so I often just ignore the computer. But when I do check my e-mail, sometimes I discover

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This newsletter is supported by member dues. Complimentary copies are provided to interested parties.

*If you are interested in joining the League, please contact **Gloria Hesser** at 624-0337.*

Stillwater LWV Calendar

Jan 8 (Tues) 11:30 AM - 1 PM
Hunan Chinese Restaurant

Tammy Henderson, Director of the Gerontology Institute: "Impact of Katrina on our Seniors"

Jan 17 (Thurs) 6:30 PM - 8 PM
Public Library conf. room

SLWV Board Meeting

Jan 24 (Thurs) 5 PM - 6:30 PM
Public Library Auditorium

Elected Officials Reception, sponsored by Friends of the Library & SLWV. (Leaguers bring savory finger food)

Jan 29 (Tues) 11:30 AM - 1 PM
Perkins Family Restaurant

Dan Galoway, Stillwater City Manager, the City's perspective about alleged Fire Fighters' labor shortage

Jan 30 (Wed)

Advocacy Day at the Capitol (Call Karen if you are attending - 377-3602)

Feb 4 (Mon) 7 ~ 9 PM
Joyce Cox's home
1523 N. Glenwood

SLWV book discussion (*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver)
Leader: Marlee Pierce

Feb 5 (Tues)

Presidential Primary: VOTE!! (Also, County Tax renewal)

Feb 14 (Thurs) 6:30 PM - 9 PM
Meditations

SLWV Annual Banquet & Silent auction. Speaker: **Michael Crutcher**, Commissioner, OK Health Dept.: "A Report Card on Oklahoma's Health and Health Care Services"

Feb 21 (Thurs) 6:30 PM - 8 PM
Public Library conf. room

SLWV Board Meeting

Feb 26 (Tues) 11:30 AM - 1 PM
Perkins Family Restaurant

Paula Dennison, City of Stillwater, Land Development: "New Coding and Zoning Ordinance"

Mar 3 (Mon) 7 ~ 9 PM
Trish Emig's home
2724 N. Monroe

SLWV book discussion (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*)

Mar 5 (Wed) 9 AM - 5 PM

Women's Legislative Day at the Capitol

Message....(continued)

something that I probably would have enjoyed attending, but the event is already over. It's just as well because I'm trying not to be as involved in things." Doesn't that sound like a quote from StoryPeople?

Hmmmmm. . . . " . . . I'm trying not to be as involved in things . . . " Hmmmmm " . . . there might be something important that I'll feel like I **should** do" Hmmmmmm

So what compels folks like Shirley and me to check out "things?" Is it the **shoulds** in our lives, or is it that we're afraid that we might miss something? Are Leaguers like us compelled to be involved **just because**, or do we feel a moral obligation to be informed? According to recent surveys, fewer people read. And I won't begin to describe what many people watch on television. You can be sure, however, that several folks are tuned in to the latest reality t.v. show, and the reality show they're watching is not the Presidential Candidates' Debates!

In a fairly short time (February 5th), Oklahomans will be asked to select a Presidential candidate from each major party. How many of you registered voters have made up your mind about the person you're voting for? I know that I haven't. I know what my gut is telling me, but I haven't REALLY paid close enough attention. I've been checking out the National League's website at **vote411.org** as well as the **ProjectVoteSmart** website. On the Vote Smart site, there is information about the candidates' backgrounds including their education, and both their professional and political experiences. The site also provides what organizations the candi-

dates belong to as well as the candidates' voting records if they've held, or are currently holding, a public office. There also is a link to some of the candidates' speeches and many of their public statements. I would encourage you to access the site to learn more about the candidates.

Over the next several months, our local League will be asking for your help as we educate voters and as we encourage potential voters to register and cast their votes. Regardless of our motives to be involved, all of us are intent on making informed decisions at the poll. And we want others to be reasonably informed as they cast their votes. So, I know that you'll step up and support Deanna and other League members as we call on you. **We think that it's grand that you are involved!**

Trish

Results of the SLWV Local Program Review December 8, 2007

The SLWV membership reached a consensus to retain the following positions under City Government: Structures and Functions of Local Government Bodies: (These are found in your 2007-2008 Stillwater LWV Yearbook)

1. Open Meeting Law position
2. Conflict of Interest position
3. City Commission and Advisory Boards position
4. Long Term Financial Obligations position
5. Comprehensive Community Development Plan position
7. Parks, Events and Recreation position

The SLWV membership reached a consensus that a committee comprised of **Kay Murphy, Gloria Hesser, Peggy Murphy, and Shirley Weeks** will make a

recommendation to the SLWV Board regarding the **rewrite** of the following section in **Position Number 6: Law Enforcement** after reviewing the language and intent with Stillwater's local law officials:

"The LWV of Stillwater believes the law enforcement agencies serving the Stillwater area could be improved through the following recommendations:

- a. The Police Department should continuously upgrade the training of police officers. Additionally, police officers should be encouraged by the Department to take college courses to improve their overall effectiveness as law enforcement officials.
- b. The City should generate sufficient revenues and equitably distribute such revenues so the police department is adequately financed.
- c. Stillwater should have a law enforcement advisory board to review policies to ensure conformance with state and local statutes and compliance with constitutional protection as well as affirmative action goals."

The SLWV membership reached a consensus that the SLWV Board can monitor the release of the new zoning ordinance for the Stillwater community. After the ordinance has been released, the SLWV Board can review the new language to ensure the new ordinance is in agreement with the SLWV's **Position Number 8: Local Zoning Code Enforcement Procedures**. The Board, then, will inform the SLWV membership of their findings and any recommendations. NOTE: The action regarding this consensus will occur if the new zoning ordinance is released prior to the end of the current SLWV Board's term.

The SLWV membership reached a consensus that a committee comprised of **Avis Rambo, Esther Winterfeldt, and Thora**

Program review...(continued)

DuBois will make a recommendation to the SLWV Board regarding the rewrite of **Position Number 9: Education-Study of policies relating to discipline, the School Board and general school issues, including the subsection titled: Student Expulsion and Suspensions.** The Committee will review the language and intent with appropriate Stillwater Public School officials prior to arriving at new language.

Also, Esther Winterfeldt provided a recommendation to the SLWV Board that the SLWV "undertake a study on the status of health care in Payne County and Oklahoma as a local action priority." (Please see Esther's proposed and accepted recommendation on Page X of the VOTER.) This recommendation will be reviewed and voted on at the Annual Meeting which will be in April, 2008.

Any new language for the SLWV's Position Numbers 6, 8 and 9 can be brought to the SLWV Board at their January or February Board Meetings to be included in the March SLWV Voter for review by the membership prior to voting on the language change at the April Annual Meeting.

Results of the SLWV National Program Review December 8, 2007

The SLWV membership reached a consensus to retain the following LWVUS Positions:

Representative Government

- Promote an open government system

Natural Resources

- Promote policy and legislation that results in an environment beneficial to life

Social Policy

- Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all; promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans through legislation and the judicial system

The SLWV membership reached a consensus to request that the LWVUS **restudy** the International Relations Position regarding U.S. trade policies and the result that these policies, as well as the result that subsidies granted by the U.S. government to local and regional farmers, have on any nation's economy and subsequently, any nation's people. Trish will forward this recommendation to the LWVUS.

I, personally, brought home good feelings from the annual holiday brunch. Two things happened: the food was enjoyed by everyone, and it was obvious that many of you genuinely believe the League makes a difference. You confirmed your feelings when you spoke up and suggested the revisions to both the local and national League positions. You're my heroes and heroines.

Trish Emig

January 8th Noon SLWV Meeting at Hunan's

Dr. Tammy Henderson, Director of the Gerontology Institute, Oklahoma State University, will present her research about Katrina and the effects on people in the area in New Orleans. This will be an informative and interesting program on a timely subject of widespread interest.

Esther Winterfeldt

Proposal for a Study on Health Care

It is proposed that the Stillwater League of Women Voters undertake a study on the status of health care in Payne County and Oklahoma as a local action priority. While there is a national priority in this area, there does not appear to be any sizable activity and yet this is one of the most critical issues facing us today. Presidential candidates are almost forced to publicize a health care plan, but Congress has not dealt with this issue for many years. The impending crises in Medicare and Medicaid, as well as Social Security funding, are imminent with the predicted increases in the number of persons reaching retirement age and living longer than at any time in the past. The medical system is still focused on treatment, rather than prevention of illness and wellness maintenance, which adds to costs and concerns about health insurance, etc.

Recent publicity points to a number of areas in which the state falls short in regard to citizens' health. These include:

1. Oklahoma is ranked at almost the bottom of all states in regard to health status.
2. Teenage pregnancies are on the rise and represent some 40% of all births.
3. Smoking rates are higher in Oklahoma than in many other states.
4. A high obesity rate is found among both children and adults.
5. The incidence of diabetes and cardiovascular disease is very high.

Health care...(continued)

6. There is questionable adequate mental health care in Oklahoma.

7. The costs of health care continue to rise, making coverage beyond the capability of some citizens.

8. Government programs such as the SCHIP are caught in the political grip of Congress and there were recent cuts in Medicaid funding for children.

9. Oklahoma has a high percentage of elderly in the population, many dependent on continued government assistance which may gradually decrease.

I do not know if Stillwater and Payne County data show all the same trends, but I am proposing that we need to collect these data and then make a decision about possible actions the League could undertake.

Esther Winterfeldt

Karen Hendren's presentation on Nov 13th

Karen Hendren, Chief Operating Officer of Stillwater Medical Center, visited with the League membership about "Trends in Healthcare Coverage." Karen made several significant points:

- Stillwater Medical Center's payer mix, based on gross charges are:
 - ^ Medicare: 44.5%
 - ^ Commercial/Managed Care: 36%
 - ^ Medicaid: 9.5%
 - ^ Self-Pay: 7%
 - ^ Other: 3%
- Census Bureau statistics released in August, 2007 show that the ranks of the uninsured rose by 2.2 million to 47 million

Americans without coverage in 2006 (This represents 15.8% of the population, an increase from 15.3% in 2005).

- Insurance premiums rose by 7.7% last year (2006).
- Workers, particularly low-wage earners, often decline coverage because premiums are rising faster than wages.
- Stillwater Medical Center's projected bad debt was over \$7,000,000 for 2007; Stillwater Medical Center's projected Charity Care was projected to be a little over \$2,000,000 for 2007.
- Stillwater Medical Center has discounts ranging from 35% to 100% of charges for those who apply for financial aid and meet the requirements of the Financial Assistance Policy. The Policy is based on the Federal Poverty Level, and eligibility extends to families up to 350% of FPL based on family size.

- Stillwater Medical Center also has a discount policy of 30% for those patients who have no third party coverage. The Medical Center provides payment plans as well as the discount policy.

- Stillwater Medical Center will continue focusing on patient satisfaction and quality care, recruiting physicians, and offering services in Stillwater which patients may otherwise travel out of town to receive. The Center will continue to strive for more efficient operations in order to meet the challenges of shrinking reimbursements and increasing costs. The Medical Center recognizes that the services provided are only as good as the people who provide those services. In this vein, the Center will continue to invest in employee retention by providing education to employees, and recognizing and rewarding those

employees who are excellent performers.

Trish Emig

Book club report: *Sweet and Low* by Rich Cohen.

One member of the book club wondered why we were reading a book about chocolate (same title, different author) and others questioned why we were reading about artificial sweetener. It turns out that this pink covered book was about a lot more than sweeteners. It is a story of Ben Eisenstadt who invented sugar packets and *Sweet 'N Low* and written by a grandson whose mother was disinherited.

It covers many subjects: Eastern European Jewish history, the history of Jews in Brookline and Chicago and family intrigue. It is the story of sugar in the Americas and because of the dieting craze in America, the search for a zero calorie substitute. So the story of sugar turns into a tale of Saccharin, Cyclamate, Aspartame and Splenda and how they all came to be approved by the FDA. This means Washington, which means politicians. In this case, Donald Rumsfeld and Ronald Reagan's names, among others, appear. Of course, if it is New York and big money the mob and FBI trials are bound to be part of the story, which they were.

What did we learn from this book? If you have writers in your family, you would be wise not to disinherit them because they might write a book about the family.

Beth Thornton

Upcoming books:

February 4th: *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver

(Continued on p.5)

Books....(continued)

Place: Joyce Cox
Leader: Marlee Pierce

March 3rd: *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini

Place: Trish Emig
Leader: Bren Bose

April 7th: *Vanishing Acts* by Jodi Picoult

Place: Syamali Nandi
Leader: Avis Rambo

May 5th: *The Road* by Cormach McCarthy

Place: Bren Bose
Leader: Judy Clay

City-wide Reception for Elected Officials

Friends of the Stillwater Public Library and LWV Stillwater are holding a reception for Stillwater's elected officials Thursday January 24. The reception will start at 5 pm and will last until about 6:30 pm. OK Legislators with districts that include Stillwater (Rep. Ingmire, Rep. Denney, and Sen. Morgan) will be there as well as City Council members, County Commissioners, and School Board Members. City Department Heads and the Superintendent of Stillwater Schools have also been invited.

The reception is planned as a chance for all citizens of Stillwater to voice concerns, or just get to meet elected officials in an informal setting.

The League and the Friends of the Library will provide refreshments. The League has volunteered to bring savory (non-sweet) finger foods to the reception for elected officials on January 24. If you would like to provide some finger foods please call or e-mail Karen Melcher, 377-3602 or

kjmelcher@hotmail.com. Suggested foods are vegetable or fruit plates, cheese and cold cut platters, or various spreads or dips with chips or crackers. The food can be brought to the library kitchen on the second floor any time between 3 and 5 pm.

Karen Melcher

January 30 is Advocacy Day at the Capitol

The League of Women Voters of Oklahoma invites you to save Wednesday, January 30 to attend Effective Advocacy: A Grassroots Lobbying Seminar. The sessions will run from 9:00 to 3:00 o'clock at the State Capitol Building. Please urge non League members to come and learn how to influence Legislators and get legislation passed. We are fortunate that Jean Warner is working on the program again. She does a wonderful job of putting together informative sessions with good speakers. Those attending can learn about issues which will be important this session, learn how the legislative process works, learn how to follow legislation through the House and Senate, and learn lots more.

Who should attend: Lobbyists, community and neighborhood leaders, nonprofit agency board and staff members, concerned citizens - everyone who wants to gain or improve their advocacy skills. A registration form will soon be e-mailed to you and be available on our website also. The registration fee of \$50 includes morning snacks, a box lunch, a closing reception, and a packet of information that includes the League's book, *A Guide to Effective Citizen Lobbying*. On-site registration is \$60.

Again, please get this informa-

tion to anyone who you think may be interested in this event. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Karen Melcher

WE ARE ONLY AS LOUD AS YOUR VOICES AND FOLLOW THROUGH

Here's the deal. We are fast approaching the 2008 Oklahoma Legislative session. Our esteemed Stillwater-based Senator, and joint Speaker of the House, Mike Morgan, and Stillwater-based Representative, Terry Ingmire, are term limiting after this legislative session. There was legislation that was passed in the 2007 session which our local League, and our National League does not support. And there is speculation that the esteemed Senator Andrew Rice from OKC who is running against Senator Inhoff will be VERY present regarding key legislation reform. What are we going to do about these opportunities that have presented themselves to us? Nothing? Or are we going to come together and agree upon a local League agenda, and stop just short of BEING ROWDY with weekly e-mails, weekly visits to the Capitol, and weekly telephone calls to our esteemed elected officials to remind them of our League's priorities.

This is a golden opportunity. What do our elected officials, who are term limiting, have to lose? Do we want to risk losing our reputation of being perceived as die hard, passionate, and noisy critical thinkers who strut our stuff?!?!? Come on gals and guys. We can do this . . . TOGETHER.

Trish Emig

Vote on Tuesday, February 5th

Please remember to vote on Tuesday, February 5th in the Presidential Preferential Primary Election, the County Sales Tax Renewal and the Meridian Technology School Board Election. There will be one ballot, determined by party affiliation (Democrat, Independent, or Republican), for the Presidential Preferential Primary and the County Sales Tax Renewal. There is a separate ballot for the Meridian Technology School Board Election. Sample ballots can be viewed at the Payne County Election Board website.

The Payne County, Oklahoma Sales Tax Renewal is to extend the existing levy and assessment of three-eighths of one percent which expires on December 31, 2008. The revenues from this tax are used as follows:

- 53% Road and Bridge Improvements
- 15% General Fund Purposes
- 20% Capital Outlay and Operations of the Payne County Exposition Center and Fair Board
- 7% Operations of the Payne County Extension Center
- 5% Capital Expenditures for Rural Fire Fighting Equipment

If the tax is renewed, the Payne County Sales Tax will become effective January 1, 2009 and be limited to five years, terminating on December 31, 2013.

There are two candidates for the Meridian Technology School Board:

- Jerry Franklin of 913 Oakridge Drive, telephone number 372-0358
- Tina Fugate of 5302 W. Country Club Drive, telephone number 372-4459

The League has no further information, at this point, on the candidates.

LWVUS Presidential Candidate Information

Do you want to know how the presidential candidates feel about issues important to the League of Women Voters? Are you interested in responses provided by the candidate or his/her staff unedited by journalists? The LWVUS has provided a traditional League of Women Voters' guide to the presidential candidates at <http://vote411.org>. Just click on Candidate Information. The word Alabama will appear. Under that you click on presidential Voter's Guide.

The League of Conservation Voters also has candidate information on issues of interest to them at <http://presidentialprofiles2008.org>, or you can go to <http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/issues> for more information.

Inform yourself and vote.

Wednesday, March 5th is Oklahoma Women's Legislative Day

Jean Warner has been working to expand the Women's Legislative Coalition, so this should be an interesting group. Jean is determined to have it an effective group advocating for women's issues. Would you please put this date on your calendar?!

A ProjectVoteSmart Sample

Did you know . . .

Mike Huckabee is a virgo and was born in 1955? And that some of his favorite books include *The Holy Bible*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Mere Christianity and Anything*, *Who Moved My Cheese?*, *The Complete Guide to Running* and that his personal hero is Ronald Reagan?

Did you know . . .

Hilary Clinton is a scorpio and was born in 1947? And that some of her favorite books include *Goodnight Moon*, *Little Women*, *The Poisonwood Bible*, *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, *Wild Swans*, *The Color Purple*, and that her personal heroine is Eleanor Roosevelt?

Did you know . . .

Mitt Romney is a pisces and was born in 1947? And that some of his favorite books include *Huckleberry Finn*, *What It Takes*, *The World Is Flat*, *The Battle For Peace*, *The Business of Winning*, and *Future Jihad* and that his personal hero is Ronald Reagan?

Did you know . . .

John Edwards is a gemini and was born in 1953? And that some of his favorite books include *The Trial of Socrates*, *Into Thin Air*, and *The Working Poor*, and that his personal hero is Terry Sanford and his personal heroine is Elizabeth Edwards?

Did you know . . .

John McCain is a virgo and was born in 1936? And that his favorite book is *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and his personal heroes are Theodore Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and Barry Goldwater?

Did you know . . .

Barack Obama is a leo and was

born in 1961? And that some of his favorite books are *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *Song of Solomon*, *Moby Dick*, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, *Lincoln's Collected Writing*, and *The Holy Bible* and his personal heroes include Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas Gandhi, and Pablo Picasso, as well as John Coltrane.

There is additional information (the candidates' favorite films) as well as information on other candidates, like Giuliani. Giuliani's information is sketchy which leads the observer to believe that it could be difficult for Giuliani to disclose personal information. Have fun surfing and learning about YOUR CANDIDATES!!!

Trish Emig

Global Warming Myths and Facts ~

coming to you monthly from the Environmental Defense League. (Founded in 1967, the organization's mission is to "find innovative, practical ways to solve the most urgent environmental problems.")

MYTH

Global warming is just part of a natural cycle. The Arctic has warmed up in the past.

FACT

The global warming we are experiencing is not natural. People are causing it.

People are causing global warming by burning fossil fuels (like oil, coal and natural gas) and cutting down forests. Scientists have shown that these activities are pumping far more CO2 into the atmosphere than was ever released in hundreds of thousands of years. This buildup of CO2 is the biggest cause of global warming. Since 1895, scientists have known that CO2 and other greenhouse gases trap

heat and warm the earth. As the warming has intensified over the past three decades, scientific scrutiny has increased along with it. Scientists have considered and ruled out other, natural explanations such as sunlight, volcanic eruptions and cosmic rays. (IPCC 2001)

Though natural amounts of CO2 have varied from 180 to 300 parts per million (ppm), today's CO2 levels are around 380 ppm. That's 25% more than the highest natural levels over the past 650,000 years. Increased CO2 levels have contributed to periods of higher average temperatures throughout that long record. (Boden, Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center)

As for previous Arctic warming, it is true that there were stretches of warm periods over the Arctic earlier in the 20th century. The limited records available for that time period indicate that the warmth did not affect as many areas or persist from year to year as much as the current warmth. But that episode, however warm it was, is not relevant to the issue at hand. Why? For one, a brief regional trend does not discount a longer global phenomenon.

We know that the planet has been warming over the past several decades and Arctic ice has been melting persistently. And unlike the earlier periods of Arctic warmth, there is no expectation that the current upward trend in Arctic temperatures will reverse; the rising concentrations of greenhouse gases will prevent that from happening.

MYTH

We can adapt to climate change - civilization has survived droughts and temperature shifts before.

FACT

Although humans as a whole have survived the vagaries of drought, stretches of warmth and cold and more, entire

Global Warming....(continued)

societies have collapsed from dramatic climatic shifts.

The current warming of our climate will bring major hardships and economic dislocations - untold human suffering, especially for our children and grandchildren. We are already seeing significant costs from today's global warming which is caused by greenhouse gas pollution. Climate has changed in the past and human societies have survived, but today six billion people depend on interconnected ecosystems and complex technological infrastructure.

What's more, unless we limit the amount of heat-trapping gases we are putting into the atmosphere, we will face a warming trend unseen since human civilization began 10,000

years ago. (IPCC 2001)

The consequences of continued warming at current rates are likely to be dire. Many densely populated areas, such as low-lying coastal regions, are highly vulnerable to climate shifts. A middle-of-the-range projection is that the homes of 13 to 88 million people around the world would be flooded by the sea each year in the 2080s. Poorer countries and small island nations will have the hardest time adapting. (McLean et al. 2001)

In what appears to be the first forced move resulting from climate change, 100 residents of Tegua island in the Pacific Ocean were evacuated by the government because rising sea levels were flooding their island. Some 2,000 other islanders plan a similar move to escape rising waters. In the United States, the

village of Shishmaref in Alaska, which has been inhabited for 400 years, is collapsing from melting permafrost. Relocation plans are in the works.

Scarcity of water and food could lead to major conflicts with broad ripple effects throughout the globe. Even if people find a way to adapt, the wildlife and plants on which we depend may be unable to adapt to rapid climate change. While the world itself will not end, the world as we know it may disappear.



Stillwater League of Women Voters
A nonpartisan grassroots organization

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