



July/Aug 2010 Stillwater Voter

Kirsten Tautfest, President

A Publication of Stillwater, Oklahoma,
League of Women Voters

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SLWV Calendar

This newsletter is supported by member dues. Complimentary copies are provided to interested parties. If you are interested in joining the League, please contact Gladeen Allred-Struthers at 372-7238.

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Date/Time	Place	Description
July 12 (Mon.) 7 to 9 p.m.	Home of Judy Clay 423 Oak Knoll Ct.	SLWV Book Discussion: <i>Saturday</i> by Ian McEwan (Contact Person: Pat Jaynes)
July 13 (Tues.) 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Perkin's Family Restaurant 101 E. Hall of Fame	SLWV Noon Meeting: <i>Report on the National LWV Convention</i> by Karen Melcher, OK delegate (Contact Person: Kirsten Tautfest)
July 15 (Thurs.) 7 - 9 p.m.	Stillwater Public Library Board Room	SLWV Board Meeting (Contact Person: Kirsten Tautfest)
July 27 (Tues.) 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.	Local Voting Precincts	No SLWV meeting. PRIMARY ELECTION - VOTE!! Vote for the party candidates of your choice County-wide question on Personal Property Taxes
Aug. 9 (Mon.) 7 to 9 p.m.	Home of Margaret Ewing 1810 W. 3rd Ave.	SLWV Book Discussion: <i>The Family</i> by Jeff Sharlet. Discussion Leader - Harold Sare (Contact Person: Beth Thornton)
Aug. 14 (Sat.) 10 a.m. to Noon	Home of Trish Emig 2724 N. Monroe	SLWV Brunch: <i>"Hats Off to Democracy: Celebrating 90 Years of LWV."</i> Come and enjoy the brunch and wear a hat to get into the spirit of the topic. (Contact Person: Trish Emig)
Aug. 24 (Tues.) 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.	Local Voting Precincts	RUNOFF ELECTION - VOTE!!
Sept. 13 (Mon.) 7 to 9 p.m.	Place TBA	SLWV Book Discussion: <i>Prairie City</i> by Angie Debo. Discussion Leader - Nancy Andrews (Contact Person: Beth Thornton)
Sept. 14 (Tues.) 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Freddie Paul's Restaurant 1707 E. 6th	SLWV Noon Meeting: State Questions part I. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - come and be an informed voter. (Contact Person: Kirsten Tautfest)
Sept. 14 (Tues.) 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.	Stillwater Public Library Auditorium	Forum on the State Questions Sponsored by the SLWV and SPL (Contact Person: Kirsten Tautfest)
Sept. 16 (Thurs.) 7 to 9 p.m.	Stillwater Public Library Board Room	SLWV Board Meeting (Contact Person: Kirsten Tautfest)
Sept. 28 (Tues.) 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Freddie Paul's Restaurant 1707 E. 6th	SLWV Noon Meeting: State Questions part II. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - come and be an informed voter. (Contact Person: Kirsten Tautfest)

Help Wanted...



September 14th at 6:30pm to 8:30pm, the League has been asked by the Stillwater Public Library to lead a discussion forum on the 11 state questions. Pros and Cons of each state question will be presented to the public by League members. Please contact Kirsten if you are interested in helping with this. I would like to have 3 others, at least, on this committee. We will also be the leaders of the two September luncheons on the state questions.

Payne County faces Ad Valorem Question on July 27th ballot

All voters will need to come to the polls on July 27th to vote on the personal property tax portion of the Ad Valorem tax. The questions is phrased as follows:

"SHALL THE HOUSEHOLD GOODS OF THE HEADS OF FAMILIES AND LIVESTOCK EMPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF THE FAMILY LOCATED IN PAYNE COUNTY, OKLAHOMA BE EXEMPT FROM AD VALOREM TAXATION; PROVIDED, THAT IF SAID EXEMPTION IS APPROVED THE MILLAGE RATE LEVIED UPON THE REMAINING PROPERTY IN THE COUNTY SHALL BE ADJUSTED TO COMPENSATE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR THE LOSS OF REVENUE BROUGHT ABOUT BY SAID EXEMPTION?"

FOR THE PROPOSITION - YES

AGAINST THE PROPOSITION - NO

The question is essentially a redux of the question asked in 1998, and defeated. Some feel that it places an undue burden on owner-occupied property owners, since it does not tax renters' property. Stillwater's demographics, according to the US Census Bureau, in 2000 had only 41.8% owner-occupied units. Payne county is one of 22 counties in OK that still collect personal property tax. If the question passes, the millage burden would be adjusted to property owners, thus hitting the landlords. Commissioner Gloria Hesser told the Stillwater NewsPress that it would not affect the FY2011 budget negatively if it passes.

Membership brunch

Aug 14th, Saturday, Brunch 10 a.m. to noon. Members, please bring a dish. The location is Trish Emig's home, 2724 N Monroe. Theme--Hats off to LWV--"90 Years of making democracy work." (All members are encouraged to wear a hat that would have been worn in the last 90 years.) Program will consist of members' reflections of the past 90 years.



Hannah Atkins passed away on June 17, 2010. She was the first African-American woman elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives. Her full obituary can be found here:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/oklahoman/obituary.aspx?n=hannah-atkins&pid=143732018>

During her life, she worked to improve the lives of all, but especially children, women and those with mental health issues.

LWVUS CONVENTION 2010

By Karen Melcher, OK delegate

I found LWVUS Convention exhilarating and exhausting. We did keep busy. Caucuses and workshops began at 7:30 am and the last ones ended at 10:30 pm. At the business meetings we adopted not one, but two new studies, as well as three concurrences and 5 resolutions. I hope Stillwater League members are ready and willing to work. We also voted to increase per member payment for the next 2 years. The details of this follow under Convention Action.

The new Citizens' Toolkit for Energy/Climate Change Action was introduced at one caucus. This should be a great resource for many different groups—schools, clubs, families etc. Look for it on the web page. The League's lobbyist was at this meeting and we got to hear about how the League lobbies and advocates and got an optimistic report on climate change legislation being passed before November. However, we also got a very pessimistic report that no climate change legislation would be passed after November. It is important to get this passed now.

I also got to talk with League friends of former LWV Stillwater members Jean Byrd and Judy Buchholz. Both remain active in League, Jean in Ohio and Judy in Indiana, and have been a great asset to their state and local Leagues.

CONVENTION ACTION

Program

Convention adopted:

* A study of the federal role in public education. The study will focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The scope will be dependent on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time.

* A study on privatization: the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector.

Convention also adopted the following positions by concurrence on the convention floor:

* An updated Arms Control Position.

* An addition to the LWVUS position on selection of the president: "We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.

* An addition to the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position: "The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. The LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

Convention also supported the following resolutions:

* To support lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba.

* To call upon the Board to use the resources of the League to support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources. This strengthening should include elimination from national legislation of the exemptions for drilling and mining, as well as additional legislation requiring the federal agencies to regulate drilling and mining in a manner consistent with the preservation of a healthy environment. We also call on the Board to communicate with the President and the Congress putting them on notice that Leagues across the country are deeply concerned about this issue.

* To call upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster.

* To add the principle of TRANSPARENCY to the SARA Resolution, as adopted by the LWVUS Convention of 2005. Revised to include the following Principles: Security; Accuracy; Recountability; Accessibility; and Transparency.

* To call upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all.

* To call upon the LWVUS to highlight the need for those responsi-



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LWVUS Convention, cont.

ble for the oil spill to be held accountable. Further, the LWVUS demands that our government hold those responsible for the environmental disaster accountable for the clean-up. The LWVUS further urges the legislative and executive branches of the federal government to immediately take all necessary steps to maximize to the extent practicable the ability and efforts of all relevant federal agencies and departments to take action, and to work with the U.S. coastal states and communities most directly and immediately affected, to respond creatively, efficiently and effectively to the environmental, health and economic crisis created by the oil flowing from the out of control BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico and by the efforts to contain and disperse it.

Bylaws

* Article III, Sec. 2 A (3), Membership, was amended by striking out the word HONORARY before the words life members. The by-law will then read "those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more shall be life members excused from the payment of

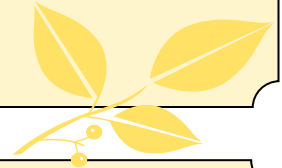
dues. (Note: All Leagues must conform their bylaws to this change.)

* Article IX, Sec. 4, Convention Powers, Article X, Sec. 4, Council, Powers, Article XIII, Sec. 3 and 4, Financial Administration were amended to provide that a biennial budget would be adopted at Convention, starting in 2012. (See updated bylaws at this link.)

* Article X, Sec. 1. Place, Date and Call of Council was amended to provide that council shall be held at a time and place or in a manner determined by the national board.

Budget

See the 2010-2011 budget adopted at Convention. Note, the proposed PMP rate of \$29.60 was increased to \$29.70 for 2010-2011 by a motion on the convention floor. The PMP rate of \$30.00 for 2011-2012 was adopted as proposed.



IT'S DARN HARD TO BE RATIONAL IN AN IRRATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Advocacy report by Trish Emig

Advocacy work in the 2010 Legislative Session was hard work. The Capitol Bill Office no longer provides printed versions of House bills upon request. So an advocate who is at the Capitol tracking what s/he thinks is the current version of a bill and learns, through snooping around, that a "substitute" bill has been put in place of the bill that the advocate is carrying, has to figure out how to access the substitute bill. She can go to one of the Chamber reception areas and pull up the bill on the "public" computer in hopes that there are not four other people trying to do the same thing in line ahead of her. Or, if she's lucky enough to have a laptop, she can access the bill online. Then, when she pulls up the gov website, she discovers that the substitute bill has not yet been posted. The next best thing an advocate can do is go to the office of the author of the bill and hope that the Legislator's administrative support is able to provide her a printed version. Advocating and keeping ones eye on legislative business is tricky and time consuming these days.

Over the course of the last two sessions, I've learned that the source of the best information is the bill's au-

thor. I've also learned that if the author of the bill can be convinced that an advocate is truly interested in staying current with any language changes or status changes, that the bill author will keep the advocate up to date. Notice that I used the word "convinced" in the previous sentence. In my humble opinion, it is helpful to obtain information if one is perceived as trust worthy. The first question I usually have been asked by a legislator is, "Are you a lobbyist?" The second question has been, "Does an organization pay you to be here?" Also, being seen as someone who will help legislators better understand the potential positive/negative consequences should certain legislation pass, helps an advocate obtain information. Due to the size of some bills and the quantity of bills submitted, there is no way that a legislator can read every word in every bill. So, sometimes being seen as credible in specific areas is helpful.

The 2010 Legislative Session was harsh. I say that because it was fast . . . very fast and non substantive. It appeared that the majority party was trigger happy, both literally and figuratively. And it appeared that the

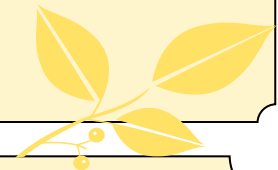
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Advocacy, cont. ...

majority party had a strategy of "no time to pass 'GO' to collect \$200, just keep a truckin'" going into the session. There was a preponderance of non substantive legislation that took hours to debate on the floor, IF the majority party did not cut off the debate. And there was a preponderance of non substantive legislation that passed that conflicted with constitutional law. As one Legislator put it, "They either don't care its unconstitutional or they truly don't know its unconstitutional." Finally, there was a preponderance of non substantive legislation that did NOT pass that now will

be on the November ballot as a state question. It will take tax dollars and time to unravel this big matrix of goop to know what is and is not law. The Courts will have to tell us.

The League's role in all of this is voter education. The voters are going to need a whole lot of help deciphering what they'll be voting on in November. I suggest that we all take cheat sheets to the polls in November because we'll need them.



The November Ballot from Hell: 11 State Questions to be decided

By Kirsten Tautfest

On June 26, 2010, Leaguers from across the State met in Stroud at Territory Cellars to work out how the heck we are going to educate the public on all the state questions on November's general election ballot. Stillwater was well represented. I am very proud of our turnout for this important event.

During the morning session, we heard from Wayne Greene, editorial writer for the *Tulsa World*; Rick Farmer, director of committee staff at the OK House of Representatives; and Bob Darcy, recently retired professor of Politic Science and Statistics at Oklahoma State University. These gentlemen provided summary background and fielded questions from Leaguers on each state question that the League did not already have a position on.

The questions will be presented in order on the November ballot. The first one is 744: Education funding. This was popularly known as the H.O.P.E. petition drive that our local League heard about in 2008 (see October 2008 *Voter*). If passed, the State would be required to spend annually a minimum to meet the average of the six surrounding states on each student pre-K through 12th grade. Sounds good on the surface, right? However, number crunchers have stated that it will either require a 25% cut in the budget to other services or a court-ordered tax increase. League positions could be interpreted as either for or against this question.

Question 746 is the Voter ID question. The League is staunchly against this question and will advocate

against it. If passed, voters would be required to present a current, government-issued photo ID if they do not have their Voter ID card. The League feels that this will present a hardship on those who may have difficulty obtaining a photo ID, such as the infirmed or indigent. Texas is also facing this question. A recent article in the *Dallas Morning News* (June 24, 2010) stated that since 2002, of the 267 cases of voter irregularity investigated by their AG, nearly all of them involved fraud with absentee ballots, not in-person voting.

Question 747 is the expansion of term limits in the executive elected offices. The eight year limit (12 for the corporation commissioner) count would include non-consecutive years. The League may come out against this question. Some older League members recalled having been against this question. Term limits are in place – in the hands of the voters without explicitly stating so. However, incumbency is a powerful force when a person enters the voting booth. The committee at the state level will make a final determination on if the League has a position on this question.

Question 748 concerns the apportionment committee. This is: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The panelists felt that this "fix" is unnecessary. The committee to date has never been used, even in its current form. Proponents of the question feel that partisan balance, with 3 democrats and 3 republicans, will be achieved. The committee will be overseen by the Lt. Governor, but s/he cannot vote! What if there is a stalemate? There is no provision for that. It may also disenfranchise independents and third parties by explicitly stating the two

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State Questions, cont. ...

current major parties.

Question 750 changes the initiative process. If passed, it would, in effect, possibly lower the required number of signatures to be a percentage of the gubernatorial election years rather than the numbers from each general election every two years. The percentage would not change, just how often and which years will be looked at. Most League members seemed to feel that lowering the numbers could be both a pro and a con.

Question 751 is the English Only question. If passed, it would require all government documents to be printed in English only, except for those required to be printed in other languages per federal law. It could save the state money in printing costs and protect from frivolous lawsuits. However, it may damage tourism and make us seem less welcoming to others.

Question 752 concerns the judicial nominating committee structure. If passed, the makeup of the committee would increase from 13 to 15 members. Those 15 would consist of 6, who would be members of the Oklahoma Bar Association, and 9 who are not, nor have any immediate family members who are. League members may want to refer to our 2009 luncheon with Bob Murphy (see May 2009 *Voter*). Again, this is another, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" issue for the panelists.

Question 754, if passed, would nullify question 744, if that one were to pass also. The panelists felt that 754 is a very dangerous question since it would make it much harder to amend the OK Constitution. Leaguers may want to refer to the state League position on "Constitutional Revision" for guidance.

Question 755 may be heard to be referred to as the "Sharia law question." If passed, OK judges would be required to stick to laws and precedents within the borders of the United States when forming their opinions and decisions. What disturbs most Leaguers at the mini-conference is the blatant mention of "Sharia

law" and not any other religious doctrine. The key to understanding this question is to look at the source, which will not be stated on the ballots. Names of the co-sponsors of the joint resolution include: Duncan, Reynolds, Coody, Tibbs, Derby, Kern, Terrill, Enns, Christian, Faught, Moore and Key of the House, and Sykes and Brogdon of the Senate. These names have come up in sovereignty discussions.

Question 756's final wording was not yet available to the Leaguers from the Secretary of State's office. It is the opting out of the federal health care question. The League actively backed the passage of the Federal health care reforms and as such will be against this question. Proponents of the questions will claim that health care should be left up to the states as part of the 10th amendment to the US Constitution. However, if passed, would it even be valid since Federal law trumps state law? And what major impact would it have on the budget if the Federal government no longer sent much-needed matching dollars to fund essential health services, like the free health clinics, Medicaid, etc?

Question 757 involves the increasing of the Rainy Day fund contribution from 10% to 15% of surplus during good years. A plus would be that it may provide more funds for the flexibility to deal with a crisis situation. The down side is that there is no assurance of a contribution in any given year, and that the legislature in power during those future crises must be willing to dip into it.

Whew! Needless to say, we've got a big job educating the public this fall before the November 2nd elections. The state League will be publishing document(s) that will help local Leagues in this daunting task. Kirsten Tautfest volunteered to be on the committee of four working on the document wording. Please wish her luck!



CARBON OFFSETS: A CAUTIONARY TALE

By Eleanor Revelle (LWVIL and LWVUS Climate Change Task Force Member)

The voluntary carbon offset market is booming. Dozens of companies are ready to help eco-conscious consumers compensate for their personal carbon emissions by contributing to projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere.

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Carbon offsets, cont. ...

The idea sounds promising. By purchasing carbon offsets, individuals can mitigate their climate impact and help finance projects that keep greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere. In addition, as more people demonstrate their willingness to pay extra for green initiatives, they send a signal to lawmakers that there is public support for tough climate legislation.

But critics consider promoting offsets to be a flawed approach. They argue that it encourages a business-as-usual attitude toward climate change by suggesting that people can neutralize their emissions without altering their lifestyle.

Compounding the problem, there are as yet no agreed-upon standards to ensure that offset projects deliver the promised carbon reductions.

Nonetheless, well-chosen offsets can be an important part of a broader strategy to address climate change. They provide an additional opportunity for individuals who have already curtailed their energy consumption to reduce their impact on global warming even further. And, fortunately, there are resources to help consumers find credible high-quality offsets.

How Much Does It Cost?

Most offset providers have online calculators that allow potential customers to calculate their emissions and the cost of offsetting that amount. However, the various calculators frequently give quite different estimates of total emissions. This reflects differences in the level of detail that users are asked to provide and in the methodology used in the calculations. Estimating the climate impacts of air travel is particularly complex.

Moreover, the offsets which are offered range widely in price, from \$5 to \$25 per ton of emissions. For consumers trying to make a choice, analysts suggest that the quality of the offset project rather than the cost should be the determining factor. It's better, they say, to invest in high quality offsets than to buy as many offsets as possible.

Choosing a High-Quality Offset

Offset providers fund a wide variety of projects, but how can consumers be sure that the offsets they buy will result in real emissions reductions? A report published by Clean Air—Cool Planet suggests a set of characteristics to look for in an offset project:

Additionality. Will the offset revenues make the project happen or would it have occurred anyway (e.g., because it is required by law)?

Baseline. Has a credible emissions baseline been determined against which reductions will be measured?

Quantification. Are rigorous accounting rules used to quantify the greenhouse gas reductions? Are emissions likely to increase elsewhere as a result of the project?

Verification. Are emissions reductions independently verified and verifiable?

Permanence. Will the emissions reductions be permanent or might they be subject to reversal in the future (e.g., if the trees in a carbon sequestration project burn or are cut down?)

Registration. Are the offsets serialized and tracked to reduce the possibility that they could be sold more than once?

The bulk of the report focuses on the companies that sell the offsets. It evaluates the providers' understanding of carbon offsets and offset quality as well as the degree to which the information they offer enables consumers to make effective choices. The authors' longer term goal is to promote greater transparency in the retail offset market.

Another helpful resource for consumers looking for guidance is the Environmental Defense Fund's Carbon Offset Project, which identifies a small number of offset projects that meet the organization's quality criteria.

Renewable Energy Certificates

Another way in which consumers are encouraged to "offset" their carbon emissions is to purchase Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), also known as green tags. RECs are created when a renewable energy facility generates electricity. One REC represents 1,000 kilowatt hours of renewable electricity that is added to the nation's energy grid in place of conventional electricity generated from fossil fuels.

Buying RECs helps build a market for renewable electricity. As a general rule, however, RECs are not considered equivalent to carbon offsets because they cannot be assumed to be "additional." This is an important consideration for consumers whose goal is to become carbon neutral. Only if the sale of RECs is a decisive factor in a company's decision to pursue a renewable energy project can the associated RECs legitimately be used to offset carbon emissions.

An important resource for potential REC purchasers is Green-e Energy, an independent certification and verification program. Green-e certified renewable energy options meet strict consumer protection and environmental standards.

The Bottom Line

For those who are serious about reducing their carbon footprint, the primary focus must be on cutting their energy consumption. And for real impact, everyone's goal must be effective public policy on climate change.

Online Resources for Additional Information

A Consumer's Guide to Retail Carbon Offset Providers, Clean Air—Cool Planet, December 2006, www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/ConsumersGuidetoCarbonOffsets.pdf.

Voluntary Offsets For Air-Travel Carbon Emissions, Tufts Climate Initiative, January 2007, www.tufts.edu/tie/tci/carbonoffsets/index.htm.

Environmental Defense Fund's Carbon Offset Project: www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=23994

Green-e Energy Web Site: www.green-e.org/gogreene.shtml

Produced by the LWVUS Climate Change Task Force

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Buy Fresh, Buy Local

The June noon meeting of the League was a program by Cheryl Baker, representing the Payne County chapter of Buy Fresh, Buy Local (BFBL). This is a national program with only 3 chapters in Oklahoma – Tulsa, OKC, and Payne County. Sustainable Stillwater co-sponsors the program. There are similar programs through USDA and also Cooperative Extension (Farm to School).

Meeting at Freddie Paul's Cheryl was able to use a PowerPoint presentation that explains "Why Buy Local?" Buying local allows you to have better tasting products, fresh from the farm, healthier because potentially there is a lack of chemicals used and it helps save the small farmers. Buying local is not the same as buying organic foods. Each farmer makes their own choice about growing organically.

Our local Farmer's Market is one opportunity you have to buy local. [Wed. and Sat. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.] Check

your local grocery store for other products purchased from local farmers.

The Payne Country plan for BFBL is to complete a survey of the local farm products grown in the county and then to create and distribute a local food guide. Then the focus will be to sponsor local foods events and most importantly of all, get the word out to the community. Eventually BFBL will have a website but not quite yet.

Tulsa chapter produced an extensive food guide in the last couple of years and this involved even visiting each of the local farms in the general area of Tulsa. Both Tulsa and OKC, as well as other communities, have farmer's markets and these are popular with consumers.

An additional fun experience at the meeting was Vera Long reading a piece she had written years earlier entitled "What Farmer's Wives Do?" Buying Local helps reward the hardworking farmer and his wife and family for all of their efforts.



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF STILLWATER**

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