

**League of Women Voters  
Bloomington - Monroe County**



**League Letter – June 2016**

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**Calendar**

June 13      Board meeting, 7:00 p.m., Bell Trace Community Room

**What's Inside**

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**Mission Statement**

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 advocacy and education.



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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER: Kate Cruikshank

Many thanks to the twenty-three members who attended the annual meeting and provided good discussion of any number of issues -- enough so that we almost didn't make it through the planned agenda! It was wonderful to get a broader range of input than is possible at board meetings. When more of us get together, the sparks of ideas fly, and it's energizing.

One thread through our discussions, or perhaps a subtext, is the transition from traditional ways of doing things to reaching out in the online world. The situation suggested by limitations on the word count for the *Keys to the Candidates* has nudged us to think in terms of putting them online in as many places as possible, yet we know that there are people who will not access them online. As Bob Zaltsberg pointed out in a meeting with me on May 31 -- and we all know this -- there are people who count on that pullout section and even take it with them to the polls. So we will continue with the *Keys* as in the past, as noted in the Report on Voter Service below.

Similarly, circumstances have suggested that we rethink how we have traditionally done the *Officials List*. Most of the information in it is online, so the question arises as to exactly what would be of most service without duplicating what already exists. Is there a way we can provide a kind of directory or index to that information? As someone who lives professionally in the world of libraries and archives, I am surrounded by people with all kinds of information to offer but for whom finding the most efficient, user-friendly way of making that information available is a real challenge and one not always well met. The *Officials List* offers the same kind of challenge. It would be wonderful if we could put together a task force of 3-4 people to discuss this and come up with suggestions on how to move forward. Feel free to take the initiative on this.

Finally, a note on the prospects for an independent redistricting commission in Indiana in the near future. The fact that the only Republican who came to the May 5 meeting was the chair does not bode well for any collective action by the committee. (See report on the meeting below.) However, it was pointed out to me that the chair is part of a group of younger Republicans who are being called the "little leadership" and who may be to some extent bucking the party line to move toward more collaborative efforts. If the results of the next election could turn things in that direction, redistricting reform might have a chance. As Matt Pierce consistently reminds us at public forums, the way to change things is to band together, let them know we've done so, and to vote. This basic, simple direction may be needed more than ever in the coming months.

Enjoy the beautiful summer weather!

--Kate

## **ANNUAL MEETING REPORT – Diane Legomsky**

Our League held its Annual Meeting on May 4 at the MCPL. Well-attended and filled with lively and very well-informed discussion, it was quite a productive and enthusiastic evening. Here are some highlights:

There was strong support and agreement on our Action Plans for 2016-17.

- **Regarding Voter Service/Voter Education:** *KEYS TO THE CANDIDATES:* It was decided to cover all contested races, and to put it all online--on our website and with invitations to other websites, without print copy in the Herald-Times; this was due to the cost of the H-T print coverage. *LEGISLATIVE UPDATES:* It was decided to see if they could be held at MCPL. *CANDIDATE FORUMS:* Kate Cruikshank will check into the possibility of WTIU and H-T conducting some of the Forums. *MCCSC REFERENDUM:* It was announced that the Board voted to support the referendum. It was suggested that we hold a public educational forum on the referendum.
- **Regarding Investigation of Monroe County Government:** The Observer Corps and the Plan committee will serve as advisors to the Program Committee in investigating the role, function, etc. of departments, elected officials, and appointed boards and commissions, as well as the interrelationships among these. The Program Committee will hold educational forums or meetings for League members and the public on these areas.

New Officers and Directors for 2016-18 were elected:

Vice President: Albrecht Holschuh

Treasurer: Carol McGregor

Directors: Ann Heath

George Hegeman

This brief synopsis can be supplemented by the Minutes of the Annual Meeting, as well as all of the following documents placed on file at the Meeting: Annual Meeting Rules; Program Report for 2015-16; Voter Service Reports for 2015-16; LWVBMC Positions; Plan for Action for 2016-17; Treasurer's Report to Date for 2014-15 (latest complete report); Budget Committee Report for 2016-17; Nominating Committee Report for 2016-17. Please contact Diane if you would like copies of the Minutes or any of these documents.

### **Reports on Program**

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The annual meeting endorsed examination of and voter education about local government and the general idea of monthly meetings, possibly at noon and open to the public. Presenters from various boards and commissions as well as the county council and commissioners would be asked to clarify

the work they do and respond to questions. As a first step, available materials on county government, such as a brochure mentioned by Iris Kiesling, would be distributed.

Members of the current Plan Committee agreed to serve as an advisory committee to the program committee in planning a series of programs for the coming year and met on May 25 to lay the groundwork. Their recommendations were that the programs not begin until after the November election and that they deal with local government generally, including city and township government as well. The first session should present a broad overview of the whole local government picture, presenting what is prescribed in Indiana law for cities, towns, unincorporated areas and townships as a starting point and pointing out potentially overlapping jurisdictions. They agreed to meet again in early October to begin to identify possible presenters and develop a series of presentations for spring 2017. Thanks to Jim and Marge Faber, Diedre Todd, Laura Trout, Joyce Pace, and Helen Hollingsworth for getting this conversation started.

**LWVIN REDISTRICTING INITIATIVE**



*May 5 meeting of the Special Interim Study Committee on Redistricting. Seated at front, from L to R: Citizen member Sheila Seuss Kennedy speaking with Chair Jerry Torr, citizen member Tom Sugar, and at the podium, guest witness James Bopp, Jr.*



May 5 meeting of the Special Interim Study Committee on Redistricting. Seated at front, from L to R: Senator Karen Tallian, Senator Timothy Lanane, citizen member Ted Boehm, chair Jerry Torr at center, behind him Senator John Bartlett, staff member Peggy Piety.

The second meeting of the Special Interim Study Committee on Redistricting on May 5 was attended by LWVBMC members Diane Legomsky, Carol Walter, Velma Davis, Pat Harris, and Kate Cruikshank. Following a presentation by James Bopp, Jr. opposing any change in the redistricting process, committee member Tom Sugar presented the No Politics Plan he has developed, based on the nonpartisan approach of Iowa, including the Lead or Leave website he has developed showing how such an approach would change the districts in Indiana ([www.leadorleave.org](http://www.leadorleave.org)). His handouts, with a bit of added explanatory text, can be found at this link: [Tom Sugar handouts](#).

Committee member and former Indiana Supreme Court Justice Ted Boehm then presented the history of Supreme Court cases dealing with redistricting, including questions of both whether the Court has jurisdiction and possible constitutional issues. No Republican members except Chairman Jerry Torr attended the meeting. Those present pushed for a plan of several future meetings to include consultation with redistricting expert Justin Levitt of Harvard University and inviting someone from the Iowa commission. Tom Sugar suggested 5-7 meetings and 3 field hearings before the preparation of recommendations for legislation and, following up on the suggestion of Julia Vaughn of Common Cause, members pushed for scheduling those meetings far enough in advance that interested members of the public could attend.

Presentations from the meeting are available on the committee website which is at: [https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2016/committees/redistricting\\_special\\_interim\\_study\\_committee\\_on](https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2016/committees/redistricting_special_interim_study_committee_on) Click on the “Agenda for May 5, 2016” to get to them.

## Reports on Voter Service

### KEYS TO THE CANDIDATES

The annual meeting solidly rejected the idea of creating an expanded version of the Keys for which the League would pay. The consensus was that we should proceed to create the Keys and seek as many online venues as possible for them, including the *Herald-Times*, the Monroe County Public Library's Be A Voter website, and our own League website. Bob Zaltsberg in a meeting on May 31 essentially agreed, suggesting varying numbers of questions depending upon the issues in the races, and confirmed the value of a self-contained pullout. The plan is therefore to proceed as in the past, with the understanding that the print version of the *Herald-Times* may not contain all questions but the online version will.

Our job is now to come up with good solid questions for each of the races that will allow candidates to differentiate themselves from one another as potential office-holders. ***We will need to have these questions in final form by August 1.***

Below are the races for which we will need questions, with a suggestion of how many we might aim for beyond the first one about qualifications. (I've left off county surveyor and county coroner but am open to being persuaded that they should be included if we can come up with good questions.) Joyce Pace made the excellent suggestion that "how" questions are a good way to focus candidates on providing specifics.

- County Commissioners
- County Council at-large seats
- County Auditor
- County Treasurer
- Judges
- MCCSC School Board
- RBBSC School Board
- State House of Representatives Districts 46, 60, 61, 62, 65
- State Senate District 40
- Congressional 9<sup>th</sup> District

***Kate Cruikshank will be putting out a call for suggestions for questions in early July, so please jot ideas down as you think about these races.***

## CANDIDATE FORUMS

Building on our collaboration with the Monroe County Public Library, their auditorium has been reserved for our candidate forums for the following dates. These are tentative, as we will not know for sure who the candidates are until July 6 (August 26 for the school board), but this is the plan we are aiming for. Those with asterisks may be dropped if they are uncontested races.

Tuesday, September 20 - County Commissioners

Wednesday, September 21 - County Council seats at-large\*

Thursday, September 22 - County Auditor\*, County Treasurer

Tuesday, September 27 - Judges for Seats 1\*, 5\*, and 7\*

Wednesday, September 28 - MCCSC School Board

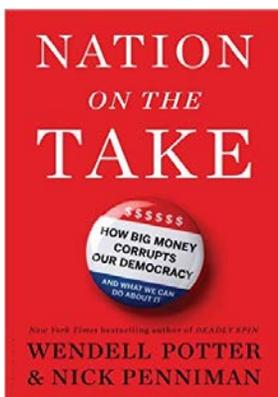
Thursday, September 29 - RBBSC School Board

We will need panelists for each of these, so think about volunteering for that. Kathy Byers and Nancy Brinegar did a wonderful job last fall and can dispel any fears you might have about serving in that capacity. Having a Republican, a Democrat, and a League member seemed a good balance and something to strive for this year as well. And of course, we'll need volunteers to greet people and relay questions to the panelists.

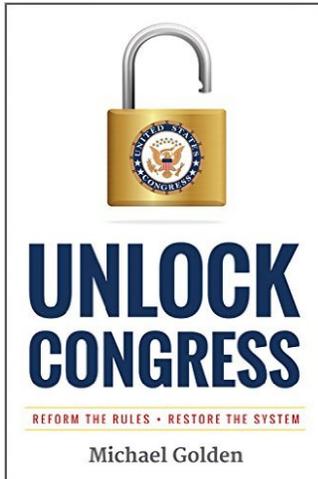
## Looking for Some Summer Reading?

## WENDELL POTTER EVENT

The visit of Wendell Potter on May 2, initiated by Hoosiers for a Commonsense Health Plan and cosponsored by the LWVBM with them and Reverse Citizens United, was very well attended, including by 19 League members, the largest number to attend any event this year, with the exception of the annual meeting. Follow-up involving Potter's latest book, *Nation on the Take: How Big Money Corrupts Our Democracy* is being explored with the MCPL; **suggestions for other ways to get this extraordinary book read by a wide range of people would be most welcome.** The book connects the campaign finance situation with five major areas of concern for all of us and also projects how a grass-roots movement might bring about change. A couple of people have suggested trying to get this book listed as a "book club" book at the MCPL, in part because it points to actions that might actually be undertaken. Eight League members have indicated interest in discussing it, so if you want to join the discussion, dive into the book now.

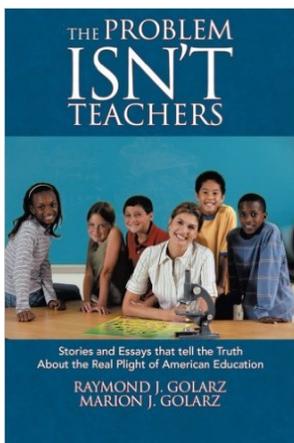


## UNLOCKING CONGRESS



Michael Golden tackles a close analysis of how Congress works, or rather doesn't work, in his book *Unlock Congress: Reform the Rules, Restore the System* (Why Not Books, Pacific Grove, California, 2015), building toward a platform of several specifics behind which constituents can unite to create pressure for reform.

## THE PROBLEM ISN'T TEACHERS



Raymond and Marion Golarz' book of this title is subtitled *Stories and Essays that Tell the Truth About the Real Plight of American Education* and is an excellent read. With decades of teaching and administrative experience in education, the authors cut through all the rhetoric about schools and teaching and bring to life the real world of teachers and their students. This book is a potentially powerful tool for those seeking to defend public schools and their teachers.

## Events of Interest

### **BUILDING A THRIVING AND COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY**

The newly formed BTCC sponsored a screening on May 22 of *The Raising of America: Early Childhood and the Future of Our Nation*, followed by a panel discussion moderated by Bob Zaltsberg. The film documents through brain research the serious effects of poverty and stress on babies and very young children and the detrimental lasting effects on their futures. Panelists Erin Predmore from Monroe County United Ministries, Cathy Fuentes-Rohwer of the Indiana Coalition for Public Education, Shirley Payne of the Indiana Department of Health, adolescent psychiatrist Mary Balle, and state representative Matt Pierce discussed why state legislatures are slow to respond to information of which we are all aware such as the need for affordable child care and the crucial importance of early childhood education and possible courses of action. The event was held at the Wonderlab, which afforded participants the opportunity to visit their exhibit on the brain as well.



*Erin Predmore, Cathy Fuentes-Rohwer, Shirley Payne, Mary Balle, and Matt Pierce discussing the film *The Raising of America; Early Childhood and the Future of Our Nation*, at the BTCC event at the Wonderlab May22.*

### **SCREENING OF "UNDER THE GUN" JUNE 9**

In keeping with the League's strong [position on gun control](#), LWV chapters around the country are organizing screenings of the new Katie Couric and Stephanie Soechtig documentary, [Under the Gun](#). From the website: "UNDER THE GUN examines the events and people who have kept the gun debate fierce and the progress slow, even as gun deaths and mass shootings continue to increase.

Through the lens of families impacted by the mass shootings in Newtown, Aurora, Isla Vista and Tucson, as well as those who experience daily gun violence in Chicago, the documentary looks at why politicians are finding it difficult to act and what is being done at the state and local levels."

The Bloomington chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America is pleased to invite all LWVBMC members to see "Under the Gun" at the Monroe County Public Library auditorium on June 9th at 6:30pm. You can watch a trailer of the film at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uqkwo3Xr2C4>

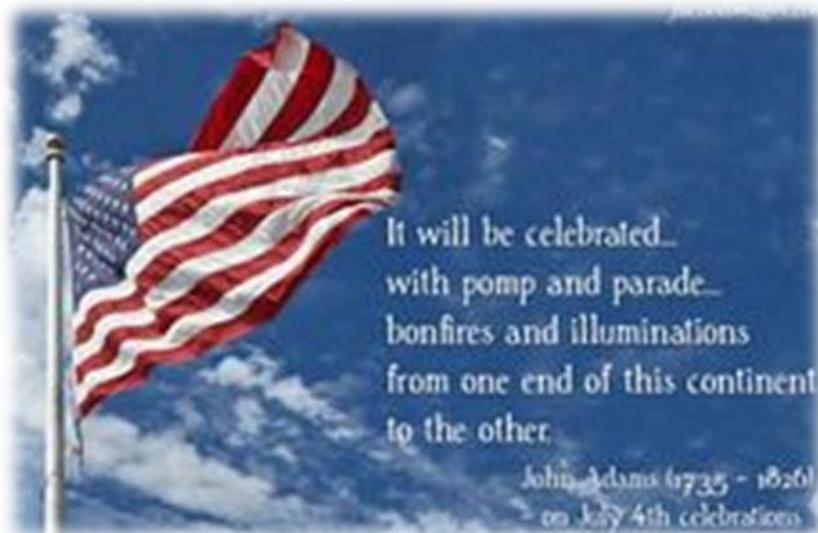
Please RSVP for the event here:

<http://act.everytown.org/event/moms-demand-action-event/2940/signup/>

Contact League member and Moms Demand Action Bloomington chapter leader Rachel Guglielmo with any questions at [rachel\\_guglielmo@yahoo.com](mailto:rachel_guglielmo@yahoo.com)

## **JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> PARADE**

Reverse Citizens United has once again invited us to join them and the Kochtopus in the Fourth of July parade. With our new T-shirts, we could make quite a showing if enough of us are willing to march. We have our big banner and signs from last year, so all we need are willing walkers. If you are willing and able to join the parade, please contact Peter Kaczmarczyk at [ghouse2@yahoo.com](mailto:ghouse2@yahoo.com).



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