



THE VOTER

The monthly publication of the Toledo-Lucas County League of Women Voters

Save the Date!

- Jan. 25 Holland Library
Signature Event Comm.
Meeting, 6:00 p.m.
General Mtg: Lake Erie
Basin Committee Position
Proposal Consensus
7:00 p.m.
- Feb. 12 Board Meeting
- Feb. 13 LWVBG Land Use
Program examining Lake
Erie issues, 7:00 p.m.,
St. Mark's Lutheran
Church, Bowling Green
- Feb. 22 General Dinner Meeting,
Program for Advocacy
- March 2 International Women's
Day Luncheon, The
Courtyard at the Navy.
11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Info: 419-530-8572.
- March 12 Board Meeting
- March 21 LWV Bowling Green
imPACT Town Hall
meeting, 7:00 p.m.
Simpson Building
1291 Conneaut Ave.
- March 22 General Meeting
- March 29 State House Day at the
Riffe Center, Columbus
- April 16 Board Meeting
- April 28 Second Annual
Signature Event
- May 4 & 5 State Convention at
Sheraton Suites,
Cuyahoga Falls
- May 14 Board Meeting
- May 24 General Meeting,
Annual Meeting
- June 11 Joint Board Meeting

Factory Farms in Ohio January 25 General Meeting Holland Branch



Mega dairies, or factory farms, disposal of animal waste can contaminate existing wells and surface H₂O. How should these farms be regulated? How are they regulated now? Should there be more extensive checks on factory farm permit applicants?

On Thursday, January 25, at 7:00 p.m. at the Holland Branch Library on McCord Road, **Gloria Greene** of the Perrysburg LWV will discuss the problems and possible solutions for dealing with this difficult environmental situation. Afterward, LWVTLC members present will take a consensus vote on the following proposed position statement of the Lake Erie Basin Committee.

Proposed Position Statement

Support of a precautionary moratorium on all new Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) that produce untreated animal waste. Support of improved and similar wastewater transportations, delivery and treatment systems on each CAFO site within the Lake Erie watershed, equivalent to the state requirements for municipalities producing the same volume of human waste. Safe nutrient management practices and disposal of sludge should be included in the requirements in order to maintain adequate water quality standards in ground and surface waters.

The LWV Lake Erie Basin Committee, LEBC, was formed in 1963 with the aid of the National League. Its member leagues are from the five states surrounding Lake Erie: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan. Throughout its 43 years of existence, the LEBC has been actively informing member leagues of issues important to citizens of the Lake Erie Basin, sponsoring forums and conferences, and testifying before public policy bodies or writing letters on issues based on state and national LWV positions on water quality and hazardous waste. It currently has position statements adopted by consensus of its member leagues on Water Resources and Water Quality (1967), Phosphate Detergent Ban (1969), Drilling for Gas and/or Oil on Lake Erie (1969), Interbasin Transfer of Water (1985-86), and Power Plants and Radioactive Waste (1990).

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Presidents' Letter

- Bonnie Bishop and Peg Hull Smith



Happy New Year everyone! Some of us took a little break from League business over the holidays but we are back on track now.

We have all been concerned with reports that the City of Toledo would not contribute to **CareNet**, the healthcare program for citizens without insurance and who are not eligible for Medicaid. Peg and I sent a letter to the Mayor and copied it to **Jan Ruma** of the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio, the organization that manages CareNet. The letter encouraged **Mr. Finkbeiner** to approve the \$62,500 that was allotted last year. Ms. Ruma called to express her gratitude for the League's active support of this important program. As this is being written, Toledo City Council voted to approve the CareNet contribution and the Mayor has not taken further action. The League advocacy program allows us to support healthcare programs.

Some League members continued to work for all of us even in the month of December. We want to thank **Rosemary Alloy** and her committee for handling the delightful Holiday Dinner in Maumee. The food was great and the cookies delicious. Thanks to **Nina Sabrack, Ann Payne, Sue Nichols, Kathy Chamberlain** and **Rosemary** for the goodies. We were pleased with the number of members attending but are always hopeful to see more League members at our general meetings.

We also want to thank **Diane Mieczkowski** for arranging the very nice reception for the immigrants who became **naturalized citizens** in December. Diane supplied the goodies and her idea to host a reception for new citizens each year has been approved. The event was held at the McMaster Center

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in the Main library. Our member **Uta Schaub** was the speaker for the event, bringing tears to the eyes of many with her wonderful and heartwarming talk about her experiences in coming to this country and becoming a citizen. The reception also allowed us the opportunity to meet a group of high school girls (who finished off the cookies) to discuss the ceremony and what the League does. Their teacher decided to give a quick civics lesson on the bus even though they actually went to look at artwork. You know we can't let any opportunity to educate voters (even future voters) pass without some action. Diane is a committee of one that either attends every naturalization ceremony or arranges for another League member to attend and distribute a voter registration form and other helpful information for new citizens.

Please plan to attend the next general meeting on **January 25**. We need your ideas and support!

Bonnie and Peg

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(Factory Farms . . .Continued from page 1)

The proposed position statement is based on positions on CAFOs adopted by LWV Perrysburg in 2004 and LWV Bowling Green in 2005 and as an LWVO Action Resolution at the 2005 state convention urging the Ohio legislature to support a moratorium on new permits for Mega-Farms in Ohio. Included in this Voter is a reproduction of LEBC's Lake Erie Letter providing background for the consensus meeting.

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations: CAFOs

Lake Erie Letter December 2005

Pondering water issues that affect Lake Erie? Add very large livestock farms to the list. Known by names such as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (=CAFO), AFO, CAO, CAFF, factory farm, mega farm, they involve hundreds to hundreds of thousands of animals; by definition, more than 1000 Animal Units, e.g., 700 cows, 2,500 swine, or 82,000 laying hens. The animals live mostly in big barns called confinement buildings.

An outbreak of large dairies has been occurring in the tri-state area of MI, IN and OH. Such CAFOs are not a new topic for some of our Leagues. With long-standing interest in sustainability, we've been watching the rise of this industrial agriculture particularly from the natural resources point of view—think water and air, about which we have positions at the national and state levels. The LWVO does not have an official position on CAFOs, but has on its advocacy agenda for 2005 “Prevention of contamination of local water supplies by large livestock operations.” It also passed an Action Resolution at the May 2005 convention urging the General Assembly to support a moratorium on new CAFO permits.

WHAT'S GOOD? In addition to effects on natural resources, CAFO issues include manure handling, animal welfare, antibiotic and/or hormone use, road wear, economics and social aspects. As with almost everything, there are pros and cons. A lot of advantages of large-scale farming are business-related (recall the famous “It's the economy, Stupid!”); mass production of eggs or milk or bacon can be likened to cars, where a factory with assembly lines can be more efficient than producing them in a local shop. There are related industries that flourish by providing things needed by the big farms or by processing the farms' products. Operating on a large scale makes investing in modern technology economical. These big farms may give a boost to Ohio agriculture and to the state's economy. There are regulations governing the large factory farms that are not applied to smaller ones. Local farmers can sell their crops to feed nearby herds and get back soil nutrients in the form of manure applied to their fields.

WHAT'S BAD? Some of the negative aspects include withdrawal of huge amounts of ground water, which could draw down the aquifers underlying the area. There's risk of contamination of ground and surface waters, from leaks or runoff at the CAFO or the fields where manure is applied. In fact some CAFOs have a history of pollution. They

contribute to the contamination of local streams and rivers such as the Maumee and Portage Rivers (parts of which have already been classified as impaired by the EPA), to the need for more extensive treatment for drinking water and to Lake Erie's dead zone.

The animals themselves are crowded in unnatural places and conditions, perceived by most of us as a stressful situation, and get little exercise. Antibiotics may be used routinely to keep them healthy; hormones are used to increase milk production; these chemicals may make their way into the food chain or contribute to genetic resistance that is spreading among bacteria. Some CAFOs are considered large reservoirs of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, a public health hazard. Cows are milked 3x/day and have a shorter life.

Concerns about pests and odors persist. Air quality can be affected: manure generates ammonia and cows belch methane. (In January 2005, the EPA offered big farms a 2-year amnesty from prosecution for violation of the Clean Air Act if they would collect emissions data on their farms.) And then there are the neighbors in preexisting homes, who see their land values decreased and their roads damaged by heavy truck traffic. Smaller farms are being out-competed; milking in CAFOs is mechanized and computer-driven. The tourist-attracting rural countryside is being replaced by industrial agriculture that is decreasing agricultural diversity. Yet in Ohio, a law was passed in August 2003 that forbade local restrictions about manure, insects or rodents, odor, or siting for CAFOs.

WHO PAYS? We are all subsidizing these farms by paying to repair roads their trucks damage, provide milk price supports, store the products of overproduction such as powdered milk, and deal with manure and the threat of contaminated water supplies. The large farms are getting much of the U.S. subsidy money, as can be seen on the Environmental Working Groups database of Ohio farm subsidies (www.theoec.org).

THE NUMBERS In the US, data on dairies (www.usda.gov) indicate that between 1997-2001:

- ◆ the # of dairies shrank by 21%
- ◆ the # of milk cows only shrank by 1%
- ◆ milk producing grew by 6%
- ◆ the # of farms with over 500 head grew by 20% and produced 40% of US milk.

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By 2004, #cows kept declining while milk/cow kept increasing (197 lbs. above 2003).

In Ohio, there are 150 large CAFOs at present, about 1% of the 15,500 CAFOs in the US. Twenty are dairies, but that number is poised to double, given the permits and applications pending. The Vreba-Hoff Dairy Development LLC, founded in 1997, has been aiding immigrant farmers, mainly Dutch, in establishing these large businesses in OH, MI and IN and intends to put in about 200 of them. Factory farms are agricultural entities in Ohio, thus exempted from local , township and county zoning. Permits are not required if there are fewer than 700 cows.

In Wood County, OH, Manders Dairy, 6 m SW of Bowling Green, has been operating since 2002. Four more are in the works: Reyskens is 9m SW of the city, Naomi is 6m S of it, a fourth site is 5m and a fifth 10m SE of the city. The herd size varies: Manders stayed just under the 700 cow level at which the need for permits from the ODA kick in [= 1000 Animal Units], but now intends to increase to 2,100. The next two plan for 925 & 1565, respectively. It seems that in this county two of the main CAFO requirements are met, cheap water and easy access to good transportation routes. Ohio's largest dairy so far, Van Deurzen, is planned in Hardin County, 75 m S of Toledo, for 4,500 cows.

WATER QUALITY To understand why water quality is a major concern, consider the soil in NW Ohio: formerly called the Great Black Swamp, it is flat land that drains slowly. Usually less than a foot of clayey soil tops many feet (~20) of silty, sandy clay containing some gravel. It's known as glacial till, on top of limestone bedrock. Centuries-worth of prairie grasses or swamp forest helped enrich it. With tiling to drain it, this rich old lake bottom has become very farmable, although there is often visible standing water following rain. Soil and bedrock can fracture -- those fractures may be very old and permanent, and combined with other big pores such as earthworm tunnels and the countless abandoned, uncapped oil wells, (locations of many unknown) left from a century ago, they can provide a direct channel to tiles and streams and ground water. Part of the geological report needed for a CAFO permit is a subsurface investigation to help minimize (not eliminate) the risk of seepage from the manure storage pond into local surface and ground water.

Although there are different watersheds (from which water drains into a collection area separated from others by a divide) involved in the dairy sites near Bowling Green, Lake Erie is their repository. In Wood county, Manders Dairy is in the Maumee River basin;

water from that farm travels from soil into ditches leading to Tontogany Creek, then into the river (entering it 1/4 mile upstream of the intake pipe for Bowling Green's water supply) and into Lake Erie. Water from the other dairy sites goes into the Portage River, which also ends up in the lake. The Hardin county dairy will be in Ada, from which four rivers could be affected: the Auglaize, Blanchard, Ottawa and Scioto (leading to the Ohio).

GROUND & SURFACE WATER The potential impact on ground water depends on the rate of withdrawal from the aquifer, the rate of recharge, whether the recharge areas are getting contaminated water, and how much polluted seepage occurs into fractures and tiles. The water CAFOs return to the ground is not as clean as that which they withdraw. A report in the Bowling Green Sentinel-Tribune (3/3/05) said a federal appeals court had ruled on February 28 that the new EPA regulations are not ensuring compliance by the mega-farms with the Clean Water Act's requirement to control water pollution from manure.

Ohio EPA's program to restore polluted bodies of surface waters lists 40 in progress or planned in Ohio, including 5 that describe impacts from CAFOs: Bokes Creek, Little Miami River basin, Stillwater River, Sugar Creek, Wabash River. In May 2005 the OEPA cited one of the Vreba-Hoff dairies in Putnam county for a manure spill that killed numerous forms of life in a ditch leading into the Auglaize River and thence Lake Erie. Pollution by Vreba-Hoff dairies has been documented in MI, where suits have been filed by the Dept. of Environmental Quality; two CAFOs must now install waste treatment plants on site.

MANURE HANDLING The biggest challenge facing livestock farmers is manure handling. Manure is an organic product derived from what was fed to the animals. If it is returned to the fields where the food was grown, it recycles some of the nutrients that were incorporated into the feed to the soil from which they were taken; it can also, however, contain pollutants such as bacteria, viruses, and pesticides. Importantly, it also adds humus to the soil, in contrast to chemical fertilizer.

In contrast to chicken farms, where it is dry the cow manure is liquid, stored in a pond (=lagoon=cesspool), and eventually applied to farm fields. There are four main methods of application: spray, injection, irrigation, or dragline. The time of year, how wet the soil is, how much crop residue is on the field, and the weather are all important variables. Some states prohibit surface application of

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manure to frozen/snow-covered ground. Ohio still allows it, however, under careful management, recognizing the need to minimize it so as to guard water quality, and to follow USDA-NRCS standards. One of the big worries is fecal bacteria; it is relevant to compare the way sewage from these big farms and from our cities is handled.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MUNICIPAL WASTE-WATER Municipal wastewater is subjected to primary, secondary and in many place tertiary treatment processes before release. Treated water in Bowling Green, e.g., goes into a ditch that empties into the North Branch of the Portage River and thus into Lake Erie. Biosolids are recycled to area farmland under an OEPA-approved sludge management plan. In the next several years the plan will be upgraded to produce class A sludge, a quality safe enough to sell as mulch.

The city must report information to the OEPA on a monthly basis and there are on-site inspections. The city must provide to the owner of the fields an analysis of the nutrients in the sludge before application. The factory farm does not test for bacteria, but the city has to pass a bacteria test of less than 10,000 colonies/100ml every three months (BG's data show 40-50 colonies per month). The city's OEPA permit requires that the plant effluent have biochemical oxygen demand and suspended solids concentrations not exceeding 10mg/l and 12mg/l respectively on a monthly average.

The city cannot apply sludge when the fields are frozen, snow-covered or saturated, no exceptions. The farmer, in contrast, is not supposed to apply in the winter unless it becomes necessary (which is likely since inadequate manure storage capacity is common). the city must treat whatever it applies to the land to meet these specifications. The farmer merely tests and applies it to the land.

MONITORING Is there adequate monitoring of these CAFOs? Many scientific studies are in progress, indicating many unanswered questions: monitoring of nutrients and trace elements in runoff from dairy operations in CA; denitrification in ground water receiving nitrate from poultry and dairy in WA; moni-

toring concentration of nitrate in springs and ground water near dairy farms in FL; using DNA/RNA/dye tracers to track sources of nutrients and bacterial contamination in wells and streams in AR, MO, NC and VA; monitoring ground water in deep wells in KS and OK for contamination from cow manure irrigation practices; with CDC, study of occurrence of antibiotics, pathogens and bacterial resistance patterns in soil and water at CAFOs; sampling to determine occurrence of antibiotics in US streams compared with main animal type in each watershed (www.water.usgs.gov/owq/AFO/studies). The situation is a bit reminiscent of our building all those nuclear reactors to generate electricity without figuring out what to do with the radioactive waste they produced, and today we are still struggling with that problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS Sustainable agriculture requires that the quality of local ecosystems not be diminished. Since the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) grants the permits for these Ohio farms, we can only hope that they have a long-term plan that is data-based. The farms' operations need to be monitored which is also done by the ODA, but at present that only occurs 1-2x/year and records are self-reported by the operators. More frequent oversight is needed and should be done by disinterested parties in order to be considered impartial.

Agricultural sustainability is crucial to our food supply and the health of other ecosystems. Because these concentrated systems are relatively new and inadequately monitored there are many unanswered questions about their effects. The concentrated aspect presents a potential for a very hazardous ecological disaster such as has happened in NC. A moratorium on new ones would allow us to see how the CAFOs we already have are performing and what further changes/safeguards are needed if more are to be permitted. Groups calling for a moratorium include five states and the American Public Health Association, the MI and Canadian Medical Societies, the Iowa and Ohio Farmers Union, Citizens Against Mega-Dairies, Wood County Citizens Opposed to Factory Farming, many counties and townships and school boards and the LWVs of Ohio, Bowling Green and the Perrysburg Area.

References: www.water.usgs.gov/owq/AFO/studies www.mlui.org
www.nass.usda.gov/oh www.theoec.org
www.ohleap.org/FactSheets/index www.vrbahoff.com
www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/factor/stohi www.ohioline.osu.edu
www.biomuncie.org/Dutchfarming.htm www.factoryfarm.org
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www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/cafo/info.html www.michigan.gov

Tri-League Luncheon

The December 5 tri-League luncheon was held at the Carranor Club, hosted by the Perrysburg LWV. The scheduled speaker, Marcy Kaptur was not able to leave Washington but Wood County Commissioner, Tim Brown, and LWVO President, Linda Lally, were worthy substitutes. Questions for Congresswoman Kaptur were collected to be delivered to her by Vicky Ewald and published with their answers when available.



Linda Lally and co-Pres. Bonnie

Commissioner Brown's remarks highlighted some issues of regional concern to area Leaguers touching on land use, the economy and environmental protections. He noted that only 14% of all Ohio farm land is of the best sort and 87% of that best farmland is in Wood County so land use decisions must be made with that fact in mind. When farmland is lost in Wood County it is likely to be some of the best land in the state and irreplaceable.

He explained that the county's largest source of income is the one cent it gets from every dollar of sales tax, citing Levis Commons and Bass Pro as boons to county finances. He noted that Wood County's sales tax is lower than Lucas County's. Recent state budgets have eliminated several million dollars in support for child subsidies, job training and various other reimbursements. In almost every area in which the state provides income that income has been reduced. County officials have done what they could to keep "their heads above water" and have not had to cut any services despite decreasing state support. He said they were the only county in the region that had an increase in jobs, some 700 plus, in the previous quarter.

In response to a question regarding tax abatements he said they were given to stimulate business and job development in the county, and that the commissioners only approve those that are approved by the local governments and do not simply rubber stamp those decisions. He also noted that by common consent and strict policy of the county commission they were not allowed to entice companies from nearby areas to relocate in Wood County. If a company approaches them from Toledo "they work to try to keep it in Toledo because the region has a vested interest in a strong Toledo." When asked about the presence of low income housing in Wood County the commis-

sioner said it existed in Bowling Green and Walbridge and throughout the county.

In regard to factory farms (CAFOs) Brown said that if the "EPA was stronger there would not be so many" but also stressed that there are two sides to the industrial farm issue. The state's position is that Ohio consumes more dairy products than it produces, and has been actively facilitating the establishment of factory farms in Ohio. However, there should be regulation and according to the commissioner Ohio has some of the strictest as it is among the top five states in its regulation of factory farms.

These farms are now regulated under the Ohio Department of Agriculture instead of the Ohio EPA. The question is what should the AgDept do differently? A major problem is the collecting lagoons which have a negative impact on people living near the farms. A new task force formed by State Rep. Randy Gardner and of which Brown is a member is planning to examine the use of biodigesters which are intended to reduce waste and assist with alternative fuel production. He stated that biodigesters would not be the solution to the problem but would be a start. He reiterated his belief that the EPA does not do a good job with problems like lagoons and local jurisdiction is limited. Because the commissioners have no authority over the farms and a very limited role in the debate they have worked in other ways to help solve some problems. They provided funds for the hiring of an additional sanitarian by the health department whose work will help to enforce the law. In a subsequent phone conversation Commissioner Brown explained that his authority was limited by law because of "Ohio's long and rich history of independent agriculture" which trumps its long and rich history of home rule. (See pg. 1 article for more information and another perspective.)

LWVO Co-President, Linda Lally talked about the recent changes in the state's political landscape after the November election, the efforts by LWVO to foster broad community involvement in issues through the imPACT project, some specific areas of election reform and a short report on the lawsuit LWVO v. Secretary of State and Governor of Ohio.

The next legislative session will have 45 Democrats and 54 Republicans in the House and 12 Democrats and 21 Republicans in the Senate with a Democratic executive and five of the six elected

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Think Green

Tips to Keep Our Environment Healthy

There are several safe substitutes for household toxins that can be used in our home. Among these are baking soda, borax, cornstarch, lemon juice, mineral oil, steel wool, and vinegar.

Using vinegar and baking soda to keep your drains running clear or to open clogs: Pour 1/2 cup baking soda down drain, add 1/2 cup white vinegar, and cover the drain. Wait about ten minutes, then pour boiling water down the drain. (Do not use after trying a commercial drain opener.)

Is there something you use or do to help protect our environment. Please share your tip with us.

Tri-League Luncheon (Continued from page 6)

administrative offices held by Democrats. With these changes the current (126th) legislature was scrambling to get their bills out of the legislature and signed by Governor Taft. Some of the bills that were being considered of concern to LWVO was HB 347, the concealed weapons act, which Gov. Taft had promised to and did veto. However since this meeting the veto was overridden by the legislature. HB 239 which discourages abortion was sent to and signed by the Gov. Taft on January 4. HB 685 which deals with procedures for administrative rules that would have made the rule-making process cumbersome for state agencies, was dropped in the face of united opposition. For more info on LWVO positions check www.lwvohio.org, click on action alerts under the news & events section.

Lally spoke about the statewide imPACT project providing information and a forum for discussion to lead to action and reform. Leaguers across the state have held these meetings aimed at engaging the community, and getting people talking about issues. LWVTLC's imPACT forum on redistricting was one of those and the only Northwestern Ohio league sponsor to date. Additional funds from the Kettering Foundation and LWVUS grants are available which will allow for another round of forums. Bowling Green LWV is planning an imPACT forum for March. See calendar in this Voter.

LWVO responded to the aftermath of the 2004 election with a 10 point platform for reform. After a smoother 2006 election some changes were made to the platform. One change is a recommendation for the creation of an independent election administration. The incoming Secretary of State, is willing to talk to LWVO about this proposal. The second change concerns the barriers to voting created by the passage of HB 3, where provisions intended to prevent voter fraud created obstructive effects. This recommendation is to allow the casting of provisional ballots anywhere in the county and the

reinstatement of election day registration. The third is recommending the statewide adoption of the optical scan voting system with specific safeguards and the adequate preparation of poll workers. The optical scanners which are easier for voters and workers to use are already in one third of the polls. Controversy exists over costs as Direct Recording Electronic machines, DREs, are in use in other areas, but the DREs could be grandfathered in counties that can adapt them with voter verifiable paper trails. The League's goal for election system reform is not only to assure fair and honest elections but also to assure transparency so that voters, the media, candidates and the general public have confidence that each election is fair and honest.

Redistricting is a critically important issue because of the formation of safe districts which along with term limits add to inertia. A polarized and term limited legislature has little incentive to compromise. Campaign finance and judicial reform are perennial issues of concern. League has been a venue giving candidates equal access to the public but campaign spending continues to surpass itself. In the 2004 Ohio Supreme Court race, \$6.3 million was spent, the highest amount in the country.

The lawsuit filed by LWVO and LWVTLC against the state citing 30 plus years of malfeasance in the election process is stalled. The state is appealing the rejection of its motion to dismiss. The local court allowed the discovery process to commence while the state appealed the ruling on its motion, but that court was reversed and the discovery process stopped until a ruling on the appeal is handed down. In closing Lally also urged the consideration of the Lake Erie Basin Committee's proposed position statement on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations at consensus meetings of local leagues across the state but especially by those like LWVTLC who are on the lake shore.

