

## Town Hall imPACT Forum Redistricting's Impact on Accountability

Redistricting was the topic of the November 16 Town Hall imPACT Forum sponsored by LWVTLC with the help of an LWVO grant from the Joyce Foundation. The forum featured a panel presentation of various perspectives on redistricting by former Mayor Jack Ford, newly elected county commissioner and UT law school faculty member Ben Konop, Toledo Public School board member Steve Steele, Jerome German, director of the real estate division of the county auditor's office and Jim Snodgrass of the UAW.

**Jack Ford**, who currently teaches at BGSU and writes a column for Sojourner's Truth, spoke about his experience while minority leader in the State House of Representatives during the reapportionment following the 1990 Census. His experience reinforces the knowledge that the process is entirely political, controlled by those in power to stay in power. The problem lies in the make up of the apportionment board which consists of the Governor, the Secretary of State, the State Auditor and one legislator from each party appointed by the governor. When the parties represented are not balanced equally one will hold sway by drawing the district lines to make seats safe. As Mr. Ford said, there is a great deal of power to be had in the legislature, those who have it want to keep it. It is a very human motivation but not a healthy situation for representative government.

**Steve Steele** linked the state legislature's inability or unwillingness to grapple with the decade old DeRolph Decision to gerrymandering. This decision declared Ohio's method of funding public schools through property taxes unconstitutional. The legislators are not accountable to the public when districts are noncompetitive and may merely tweak funding formulas or avoid the issue altogether. Mr. Steele said there were three very specific things that had an impact on schools in Ohio. The first is that no estimate of what the real cost is of educating a child has ever been made and that state funding relies on residual spending. That is

after everything else is budgeted the schools are funded with what remains. That there is an over reliance, in direct violation of the court findings, on property taxes and an under reliance on state funding. The third issue is that the local contribution to schools doesn't go up despite levies but the state contribution goes down.

**Ben Konop** talked about an aspect of redistricting that is likely not well known or appreciated. Areas are gerrymandered based on various population demographics which also include media markets. A candidate challenger typically has to spend money in several markets in order to achieve media time getting his name and message across because districts are gerrymandered in such a way that several media markets serve any particular district. This adds to the expense of campaigning and limits the likelihood of challengers succeeding. He urged the adoption of an independent non partisan commission to create fairer districts.

**Jerome German** let the audience in on the methods used in determining districts. The auditors office supplies the board of elections with demographic statistics used and the various map combinations based on these statistics using specialized computer software. When reapportionment occurs at the state level it affects all districts from the Congressional down to the precinct level. Mr. German's presentation demonstrated why redistricting is such a difficult subject to get citizens excited about, involved in or simply to become knowledgeable. He also brought attention to the LWVO and LWVUS web sites, using maps and information available on these sites for his presentation. He ended his presentation by suggesting that the redistricting software is available on the market for any group or individual to use and formulate a plan of districts to submit to the apportionment board when they next meet after the 2010 census. There is, however, no legal obligation for the apportionment board to accept or use any proposed plan other than their own.

*(continued on pg. 2)*

*Welcome New Member*  
**Lucas Dixon**

(...imPACT continued)

**Jim Snodgrass** stressed organized labor's concern about jobs and economic issues as a major factor in its involvement in politics. He pointed out that counties may be more or less union friendly and job/economic issues are more than regional but state and national in scope. Districts can and have been structured to enhance or dilute the effect of organized labor's voting impact. He spoke about the need to make Ohio one of the places to which people want to relocate and that Ohio's economic viability is a non-partisan issue.

The **aim** of the imPACT forums is to **energize citizens** around issues by providing information to lay the foundation for action. LWVTLC will continue to pursue this issue with a follow up event in the spring. In the meantime you may wish to check the imPACT web site [www.ohioimpact.org](http://www.ohioimpact.org) for additional information on this issue and look into the JEHT study of the California and Ohio 2005 defeat of redistricting initiatives. [electionupdates.caltech.edu](http://electionupdates.caltech.edu).

The League of Women Voters of Toledo-Lucas County is a member of Northwest Ohio Community Shares



The annual **Community Shares drive** is in progress. Peg Hull Smith is the League's liaison and will accept any contributions you may wish to make. Contact Peg at 419-841-6988 for information and contribution forms.

## Naturalization Ceremony December 15



Photo:  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

**Diane Mieczkowski** is a committee of one whose responsibilities are to welcome new American citizens and provide them with information that will hopefully help them exercise their newfound citizenship rights. Diane either attends or finds a willing Leaguer to attend in her place every naturalization ceremony of the **Northern Ohio District of the federal court**. At the end of each swearing in ceremony, the League gives to each new citizen a folder containing a statewide voter registration form, and a packet of information about voting, how to contact and communicate with your elected officials, and a list of all the ways to contact the board of elections in each county.

This happy duty falls perfectly within the League's mission and has been a part of LWVTLC's efforts for many years. The naturalization ceremonies are typically held every month and usually include a number of candidates from outside Lucas County. Although most of the ceremonies are held in the Spielbush Avenue federal courthouse, there is sometimes need for changing the venue especially if the class is unusually large, as was November's ceremony at Perrysburg High School for 71 candidates, or if the courtrooms are occupied with trials as is expected for the month of December.

Diane has arranged for the December naturalization ceremony to be sponsored by the League of Women Voters Toledo Lucas County and held at McMaster Auditorium in the downtown Library at 11:00 p.m. **Uta Schaub**, an LWVTLC Leaguer and naturalized citizen, will be the featured speaker. There will be a short reception after the ceremony for the new citizens, their families and guests. Anyone who has never witnessed this moving ceremony has missed seeing a real affirmation of what is best about our country. Do yourself a favor and in this most optimistic of seasons give yourself a gift by attending on December 15.

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## December 5 Luncheon with Perrysburg and Bowling Green Leagues

Please plan to attend the tri-League luncheon sponsored by the **Perrysburg League of Women Voters** on **December 5** at the **Carranor Hunt and Polo Club**, 502 E. Second Street, Perrysburg. Registration is at 11:30 a.m. with lunch served at noon. This year's speaker is **Marcy Kaptur** unless unexpected legislative activity keeps her in Washington. In this quiet, informal and comfortable setting we will have an opportunity to talk with Marcy about any of the topics that concern us and enjoy a great lunch. **RSVP by December 1 to Vickie Ewald at 419-874-4268 or 419-874-7078**. Cost is \$15 payable at the door.

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*Thank you to . . .*

**Diane Mieczkowski** and **Karen Krause** for your much needed contributions to the operating fund.

# LWV Holiday Get Together



Join your LWV friends on  
December 18 as we celebrate the  
Holiday Season

Please join the fun — and bring a friend!



## Gianno's at the Inn

301 River Road, Maumee, Ohio  
419-893-8337



Socializing at 6:00 p.m.  
with dinner to follow



Dinner will be served featuring a choice from  
Pollo Diavolo: Rubbed and roasted half chicken in spiced  
lemon broth with herbs;  
Bistro Steak Pizzaiola: Charcoal tenderloin braised in  
spiced tomato broth and crispy spiced rings;  
Salmon and Kalamatas: Roasted Scottish all-natural  
salmon with Kalamata Cream and roasted squash;  
Eggplant Marsala: Roasted eggplant in marsala sauce.  
(includes non-alcoholic beverage).

If you'd like, please bring your favorite cookie to share.

Best Wishes  
for a  
Merry Christmas



Please send your check for the appropriate amount by **December 8** to:

**The League of Women Voters of Toledo-Lucas County**  
PO Box 2506, Toledo, OH 43606

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ place(s) for the Holiday Get Together @ \$26 each. My check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

I would like to order the: \_\_\_\_\_ Pollo Diavolo (\$24)      \_\_\_\_\_ Bistro Steak Pizzaiola (\$27)  
   \_\_\_\_\_ Salmon and Kalamatas (\$23)      \_\_\_\_\_ Eggplant Marsala (\$22)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## League Brownies – A Tradition Since 1960

Sue Nichols LWVTLCL's current treasurer and past president, vice president and all around Leaguer made these great treats for a recent League get together. They are part of a long tradition and an interesting story. We'll let Sue tell it:

In the fall of 1960, as a young bride, I joined the League of Women Voters of Vermillion, SD. When it was my turn to host a meeting, I was terrified. I was just learning how to cook and I was expected to serve a dessert, coffee and tea. (No wine back then.) A friend, who was not a League member, said not to worry, she had the answer. Her brother developed recipes for Pillsbury and had come up with a wonderful brownie recipe, but his bosses wouldn't use it on the Pillsbury flour sack because it didn't call for enough flour. I made them and they were a huge success and I was instructed to make them time and again. Eight years later, we moved to Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. At the first organizational meeting of the League there I served the brownies. Again they were a success; and, of course, I served them time and time again over the years. My kids and grandkids still demand "League Brownies" when we have family get together.

\*I no longer put the nuts in the brownies, but am apt to put a walnut on each square after I cut them – if I have some on hand. They really don't need the frosting, but real chocoholics, i.e., my late husband and son-in-law, always insisted on it.

### League Brownies



2 cups sugar      ½ cup plus 2T cocoa  
1 cup shortening    4 eggs  
2 tsp. vanilla      1 tsp salt  
1 ½ cups flour

Cream sugar, cocoa and shortening. Add eggs, beat until smooth and then add remaining ingredients and beat until combined. Scrape into a 9 x 12 greased pan. Bake 25 to 30 minutes at 325 degrees. Do not over bake. When brownies pull away from the side of the pan, they are done. Cool for about 10 minutes and remove from pan. Frost with chocolate frosting (optional).

1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional)

## Presidents' Letter

- Bonnie Bishop and Peg Hull Smith



Once again, an election has passed. Voter surveys have been passed out to everyone, forums were successfully undertaken and poll workers from the League were again in place. If you have not filled out a voter survey, the form is still on our website. Complete one and return it to the State League.

It was great to see so many of our members at the **Town Hall Meeting** last Thursday. I think that everyone who attended learned a little more about redistricting. **Yvette Thompson** did a wonderful job of chairing the event and **Nina Sabrack** helped so much in making sure that the event was a success. A huge "Thank-You" to all who worked so hard to pull-off this event!

We have a very busy upcoming December, it seems. Wasn't necessarily planned that way last summer, but it should be exciting. First, we have our **joint meeting with the Perrysburg and Bowling Green Leagues on December 5**. Our December joint meeting last year was so nice, that I guess we are trying it again! It will be held at the Carranor Club in Perrysburg and **Marcy Kaptur** will speak. Call Vicki Ewald (419-874-4268) for reservations; you can pay the \$15 at the door and registration is at 11:30 with lunch at Noon.

Of particular note will be the monthly **Naturalization Ceremony** at 11:00 a.m. Although League members attend the ceremony every month, **Diane Mieczkowski** has organized something special this time. It is being held at the **McMaster Center** at the Main Public Library (easy parking underneath). We will, for the first time, host a reception for the new citizens and their families immediately after the ceremony. If you have never attended a Naturalization Ceremony, come join us this month. It is a really wonderful uplifting event – perfect for the holiday season.

Finally, our own **Holiday Party** will be held at 6:00 p.m. on December 18 at **Gianno's Restaurant**, 301 River Road, Maumee. Make sure you join us (see details elsewhere in the Voter), and bring a spouse or a friend if you like. This is our only "just social" event in the year and it is always so nice to renew old acquaintances and make new friends.

Hoping to see each and every one at one, or two, or all of our events in December. It is such a busy season, but Bonnie and I hope that we will be able to wish you Happy Holidays in person this year.

- Bonnie and Peg

## October General Meeting Focused on Fair Housing Center

The October general meeting at the Beruit Restaurant brought out about 20 Leaguers to hear



**Jennifer Teschner** talk about the work of the **Fair Housing Center**. The Center established in 1975 has been in the forefront of legal battles to eliminate discriminatory housing practices.

The suits and subsequent judgments have led to major nationwide changes in rental standards, lending policies, insurance regulations, to name only a few areas.

Ms. Teschner explained how the Center investigates complaints about discrimination and also spoke about her own experiences as an investigator while making a recruiting pitch to the audience. A common practice used by the Center to check if a complaint has merit is to send investigators posing as prospective renters who have the same characteristics except for the difference of race, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, familial status (families with children) or disability. If a prospective tenant/investigator is told the residence is not available but another, who does not fall into one of the categories where discrimination occurs, is allowed to view or encouraged to rent then the Center knows there is merit to the complaint. Its remedy is to confront the landlord on these illegal actions and seek legal redress as necessary.

The Center works closely with government agencies at all levels and with private attorneys to ensure that fair housing laws are vigorously enforced. Its counseling and investigative services are free. In addition to investigating allegations of housing discrimination, it advocates for persons whose rights have been violated, provides technical assistance with housing related inquiries, files, mediates, resolves, and monitors complaints and tries to influence public opinion about fair housing through education.

It is also a source of education and help for housing providers in a number of ways including assisting with senior housing certification, providing technical assistance, conducting affirmative marketing programs, sponsoring neighborhood tours for housing industry professionals, operating a resource library for members of the National Fair Housing Alliance, sponsoring fair housing training programs on laws, providing continuing education

for realtors and other housing industry professionals among many other programs related to renting or owning a home.

Ms. Teschner was eager to tell us about **the League's role in establishing the Fair Housing Center** in 1975 and explained that letters of support were written and had a positive effect. A cursory examination of the board minutes in the LWVTLC archives indicates the Center was a culmination of years of work by the League and other interested organizations and individuals to promote nondiscriminatory housing in the metropolitan Toledo area. Spurred on by the passage of the **Federal Fair Housing Act**, local groups saw that there was an enforceable mandate that could be used to remedy local housing inequity. What followed was a long and tedious dance among advocates, elected officials, bureaucrats, the general public to alter housing codes, eliminate housing covenants and racial barriers, attack redlining, provide for adequate low and moderate income housing and its dispersal throughout the metro area and establish plans for housing rehabilitation. The Toledo Metropolitan Area Fair Housing Center, its national reputation and accomplishments and its continuing service to the community is certainly one of the most successful of the efforts of those years.

For more information or to learn about how you can get involved in complaint investigation visit **[www.toledofhc.org](http://www.toledofhc.org)** or call **Jennifer Teschner** at **419-243-6163**.

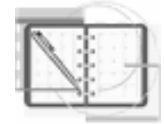
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### Stumped for Holiday Gifts?

Think League when you are considering gifts for the holidays. A **contribution to the operating fund** is a great way to honor someone and provide much needed financial support to LWVTLC.




Contact Peg at 419-841-6988 for info and contribution forms



## Save the Date! Updated 2006-07 Calendar

- December 5      General Meeting Luncheon with Perrysburg/  
Bowling Green Leagues at Caronor Country  
Club, Perrysburg. **Marcy Kaptur** speaker.
- December 15     Naturalization Ceremony, 11:00 a.m.,  
McMaster Center. The LWV-TLC will host a  
reception immediately after the ceremony.
- December 18     Holiday Party
- January 15       Board Meeting (Martin Luther King holiday)
- February 12      Board Meeting
- February 22      General Dinner Meeting, Program for  
Advocacy
- March 12          Board Meeting
- March 22          General Meeting
- March              Statehouse Day
- April 16           Board Meeting
- April 28           Second Annual Signature Event
- May 4 & 5         State Convention @ Sheraton Suites, Cuyahoga Falls
- May 14            Board Meeting
- May 24            General Meeting, Annual Meeting
- June 11            Joint Board Meeting



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*Seasons Greetings*

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[www.lwvtoledo.org](http://www.lwvtoledo.org)