

August 26 marks the **85th Anniversary of the day in 1920 that the Nineteenth Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution.**

The date was permanently designated **Women's Equality Day** by Congress through a bill sponsored by Rep. Bella Abzug.

What does the date mean today?

Historian Doris Weatherford, author of *A History of the American Suffragist Movement* (ABC-CLIO, 1998), said:

"If, today, you are a woman who wears pants, **votes at election time**, or signs a contract to rent an apartment or to get a credit card, then **you are a woman who owes a debt to the women who in 1848 launched the fight** for women's right to vote. If you take for granted that **you are the guardian of your own children**, you owe these women. If you assume that **your paycheck will be written to you** instead of to your husband, you owe these women. If you are a man who is proud to send his daughter off to college, you also owe these women."

**The League of Women Voters
of Toledo-Lucas County**
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"Why the League Filed" is the topic of the August 25 General Meeting at Sanger Library, 3030 W. Central, 7:00 p.m.

U.S. Senator and League member Diane Feinstein said, "The passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 was the vindication of Lucretia Mott's and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's vision. It was the **most important step for women in the struggle to gain political equality.**"

More than sixty years ago League founder Carrie Chapman Catt noted the reason women worked so hard to win the vote: "The politicians used to ask us **why we wanted the vote**. They seemed to think that we want to do something particular with it, something we were not telling about. They did not understand that **women wanted to help make the general welfare.**"

Join the League of Women Voters today! Membership is \$50. Send your check to the League of Toledo-Lucas County to P.O. Box 2506, Toledo, OH 43606-2506

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August 2005

The Voter



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

LWV TLC Plaintiff in Federal Lawsuit Seeking Voting System Reform in Ohio



Many LWV Toledo-Lucas County members came to the news conference held after the filing of the lawsuit. L-R Mary Karazim, Bonnie Bishop, LWV Ohio board member Vicky Ewald, Phyllis Barnes, LWV Ohio co-president Linda Lalley, LWV-TLC Co presidents Peg Hull Smith and Sue Nichols, and Jon Greenbaum of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

LWV Ohio, Columbus -- In a complaint filed in federal court in Toledo, the League of Women Voters of Ohio joined the **League of Women Voters of Toledo-Lucas County** and a dozen individual plaintiffs in suing the governor and the secretary of state for 30 years of dysfunctional election administration. Represented by a team of attorneys led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the League is claiming a pattern of failed election management, chronic under-funding of county boards of elections and inadequate training for poll workers.

"We simply concluded that a lawsuit is the most effective means of bringing about reform to Ohio's voting process," Co-President Carol Gibson said.

"Election problems have surfaced continually, and the legislature has failed to take comprehensive action with its recent election-reform bill, HB 3. We felt that the courts presented us with a last resort for addressing the short-falls of our election system."

The suit was filed against the office of the secretary of state and governor, not the individuals holding the offices at this time. "The suit does not allege fraud," Co-President Linda D. Lalley

said. "Rather, the suit alleges that Ohio has a long history of serious problems with the way elections are conducted, spanning many administrations and violating fundamental Constitutional rights of Ohioans who are eligible to vote."

The remedy sought is to bring about meaningful reform to Ohio's election process. The suit does not seek a monetary award for any of the plaintiffs.

By filing now, the plaintiffs agree that there is a good chance of reaching a resolution in time to see reforms put in place before the 2006 election. Most of the problems identified in the suit are also outlined in the League's 10-point reform plan.

The Lawyers' Committee, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization, was formed in 1963 at the request of President Kennedy to involve the private bar in legal services that address racial discrimination.

The Lawyers' Committee invited the Toledo League to be a plaintiff because of poor state-level oversight of the Lucas County Board of Elections. The secretary of state himself has acknowledged that Lucas County voters faced special obstacles.

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Presidents' Letter

by Sue Nichols and Peg Hull Smith

Summer is typically a slow time for the League of Women Voters, but not this

year. In June we had a

lovely reception for public officials and contributors at One Maritime Plaza.

In July we were asked to join the League of Women Voters of Ohio and 15 citizens

as complainants in a lawsuit against the offices of the Ohio governor and secretary of state

for 30 years of mismanaging elections. The LWV TLC board met twice and carefully considered the issues and in the end, decided to join the suit. The result is that we are getting visibility in the press (See what the *Blade* said in a recent editorial available at the LWVUS website, www.lwv.org by clicking on "Get the News" and then "State and Local Leagues in the News").

Then in August, the board had a marathon five-hour meeting and retreat. At the board meeting, we were elevated to co-presidents and Bonnie Bishop to vice president. Sharon Friedman will arrange our meetings and, with the help of Anita Levin, find speakers.

During the retreat portion of the meeting, we listed our successes for the past year and the challenges we see facing us during the upcoming year. Our successes for the year included naturalization, excellent programs for our meetings, initial agreements to pursue the lawsuit against the State of Ohio, and Voter Services (including forums, the TRY, Voters' Guide, voter protection efforts, mock elections, assisting with voter registration, voting machine training and Board of Elections work). In addition, our fundraising effort this past year was the best within any of our memories.



Peg Hull Smith



Sue Nichols

Our priority for this year is to increase both the League's visibility and membership. We want to work to become more diverse and to involve more members in League activities. Our second priority is to improve communications, both internally and externally.

We are committed to finding ways to meet these goals. Please contact us whenever you have any suggestions to make our League better. Of course, we would love to have your help with anything, large or small.

LWV-TLC Participants at State Convention in Columbus



L-R, Yvette Thompson, Terri Mills, Bonnie Bishop, Gracia Hillman, Scott Britton and Nina Sabrack.

The 2005 Convention of the League of Women Voters of Ohio was held in May. Several members of the League of Women Voters of Toledo-Lucas County were able to attend. Our delegation divided up the workshops in order to learn as much as possible. Reports will be appearing in the *Voter*.

Special guest speaker Gracia Hillman is a Commissioner with the Election Assistance Commission, charged with implementing the Help America Vote Act. If you think there's probably a League link, you're right. Several years ago Gracia was the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of the United States. Her remarks on the difficulties of bringing positive change the way our fifty states hold elections were enlightening and inspiring. But best of all? Meeting other League members.

2005-2006 SCHEDULE

August 2005:

August 25: General Meeting, Sanger Library, 3030 W. Central 419259-5370. "Why the League Filed Suit Against the Secretary of State and the Governor." 7:00 p.m.

September 2005:

Thursday, September 1: Dues are due!
Tuesday, September 13: Primary Election
Monday, September 19: Board Meeting. 7:00 p.m. Peg Smith's, 4430 Nantuckett (between Sylvania and Monroe).

Thursday, September 22: General Meeting 7:00 p.m. at the Holland Library, 1032 McCord. "Multicultural and Community Affairs." Speaker: Juanita Green, Toledo Board of Community Relations.

October 2005:

Thursday, October 6: **City Council At Large Candidates' Forum.** Nitscke Hall on Westwood at the University of Toledo. 7:00 p.m.

Monday, October 17: Board Meeting. Sue Nichols' home, 6913 Milrose (off Central)

Thursday, October 20: **Toledo Judicial Candidates' Forum.** University of Toledo Law School. 7:00 p.m.

November 2005:

Tuesday, November 8: Election Day.
Monday, November 14: Board Meeting.
Thursday, November 17: General Meeting

December 2005:

Monday, December 5: **Holiday Meeting with one of the LWV of Ohio co-presidents, the LWV of Perrysburg and the LWV Bowling Green at the French Quarter in Perrysburg.**

Thursday, December 15: **LWV-TLC Holiday Party.**

January 2006:

Monday, January 16: Board Meeting
Thursday, January 26: General Meeting

February 2006:

February 14 is the League's 86th Birthday!
Monday, February 20: Board Meeting
Thursday, February 23: General Meeting.
A Budget Committee and a Nominating Committee must be established. Will you help?

March 2006:

Monday, March 20: Board Meeting.
Thursday, March 23: General Meeting.
The information about the Annual Meeting must be sent to each member 30 days before the meeting--April 17 for the 2006 Annual Meeting on May 18.

April 2006:

Monday, April 17: Board Meeting.
Thursday, April 27: General Meeting.

May 2006

Thursday, May 18: Annual Meeting

June 2006

Monday, June 19: Joint Board Meeting

We've all read the phrase, "The League of Women Voters is a **nonpartisan** political organization." What does that mean? How does it affect how we function as an organization and as individual League members?

It means the League is an organization vitally interested in the political process, but never ever supports a political party or candidate. The League may take a stand on ballot issues on which members have studied and reached a consensus.

As individuals, however, we may support candidates and work for political parties as long as we do so as individuals and not in the name of the League. In fact, we are encouraged to do so. Only the president(s) and Voters' Service chairs are prohibited from engaging in partisan activity. And board members are prohibited from publicly taking a stand in conflict with a League position.