



The Anchorage VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ANCHORAGE
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MARY ROSENZWEIG, PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I sit writing this message on the so-called "Super Tuesday", I am getting very excited about the fact that it may actually be a *Super Tuesday* here in Alaska. One of the services your League provides is simply answering questions about a pending election - and since I have been involved in League, tonight's caucuses have generated the most phone calls I have experienced for one event. Individuals are excited to get out and participate - and I am thankful that we are able to help them figure out how to do so! My phone ear is getting sore - but it's a small price to pay when so much rides on the outcome. Let's hope that the enthusiasm continues to build for the general election in November!

The Anchorage League has been quite busy over the past two months, so I'll fill you in on some of the activities here.

Immigration Consensus: THANKS to **Marie Lavigne** for her excellent facilitation of our recent consensus meeting on the LWV US immigration study questions as well as her efforts in moderating the fall forum on immigration issues. Marie is an excellent facilitator and kept us on task with developing our consensus response for this very complicated issue.

Results have been sent to National, which is expected to finalize the national position by late March. Given the importance of the scope of this study, we requested a draft position be sent to local league boards for re-

view prior to adoption. Further, we recommended League also study policy ramifications of a more open immigration system.

MLK Day Bike Event: As you may have heard in the news this past month, there is a nationwide effort to turn the Martin Luther King holiday into a "day on" - in other words, a day to serve your community. In that spirit, a team representing League joined other volunteers at the Spenard Recreation Center on January 21 to assemble 50 donated custom fit Trek bikes for and with the help of previously selected young people ages 6-17 from throughout the community. Participating were **Diane Mathisen, Barbara Norrell, Donna Grenier, Steve Grenier, and Gene Dickason.**

Thanks to **Barbara Norrell** for hosting our annual "Holiday Happening." In addition to some great food and conversation, Lynne Ballew, Director of Safe Harbor Inn, spoke to us about her unique program which helps low income and disabled "guests" transition into permanent housing - with almost no government funds. Household items and gift cards were gathered for the Safe Harbor Inn. I'd like to sincerely thank our membership for their contributions towards this cause. Ms. Ballew reported back that our members generated enough donations to provide some level of support for 55 families! WOW—your generosity is inspiring!

And now to what's coming up. First, you should have recently received

your program planning packets for determining our 2008-09 program. Please take the time to consider your priorities and respond before the end of February. The Board will consider all responses and make a final recommendation on the 2008-09 program at our annual meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 24, 2008.

Naturalization Ceremonies: League - generally in the person of **Mary Lou Lawhorn** - has attended naturalization ceremonies for several years and registered new citizens to vote. The next ceremony is March 28 at the Old Federal Building, Anchorage. If you have never attended one, we encourage you to do so - it's a very moving experience.

Board Nominations: Have you ever considered serving on the Board for the LWV Anchorage? If not, please consider this an open invitation! A new Board will be seated at the April annual meeting, and, per our bylaws, approximately half of the Board seats are open for nominations, including three director seats and three officer seats: the President, Vice President and Treasurer. If you are interested in serving on the Board, please notify Board member Barbara Norrell of your interest at bbnorrell@alaska.com.

Now, back to answering those phone calls!

-Mary Rosenzweig

2008 ETHICS LEGISLATION - REVISITING THE 2007 LEGISLATION

Several ethics bills have been introduced this year in addition to some that are still on the table from 2007. Three subjects seem to have generated a lot of discussion both in the legislature and in the press: receipt of compassionate gifts, legislators campaigning during a legislative session and legislators declaring a conflict of interest on a bill that is up for a vote on the Senate or House floor.

The receipt of compassionate gifts is a new statute which became effective July 10, 2007. Because the gift limit of \$250 seemed to be problematic, the Ethics Committee recommended the \$250 cap be eliminated. For example, what if someone wanted to donate airline miles to a legislator or legislative employee and the fair market value of the ticket exceeded \$250 – according to statute the legislator or legislative employee could not accept the donation. (Please note the current statute did not prohibit Representative Foster from receiving a kidney. The press incorrectly reported the reason for the suggested change in statute.) [HB 317](#) was passed out of the House on February 1 and will be heard in the Senate

the week of February 4. Both the House and Senate have fast tracked the bills.

Several bills are currently moving in the legislature to restrict legislators and legislative employees from campaigning during a legislative session regardless of the office they are seeking. Currently, statute only prohibits campaigning for legislative office. The intent is to remove the appearance of impropriety and undue influence when a campaign donation is solicited, accepted and received during a legislative session. See [HB 305](#) introduced by Representative Meyer.

[HB 309](#) introduced by Representative LeDoux and [SB 203](#) by Senator Wielchowski change the manner in which legislators declare a conflict of interest on the House or Senate floor. Currently, all members of the body must agree to allow the member to abstain from voting. According to historical records, this has never happened in the history of Alaska. There is always someone who objects. Proposed legislation would allow a member to abstain if the member or an immediate

family member was employed or was negotiating for employment with a person (person includes an organization, corporation, etc.) and voting would substantially financially benefit or harm that person. Further, the bill requires the member to abstain if the legislator or an immediate family member has an equity or ownership interest in a business, investment, real property, lease, or other enterprise if the interest is substantial and the effect on that interest of the action to be voted on is greater than the effect on a substantial class of persons to which the legislator or family member belongs as a member of a profession, occupation, industry to region. Additionally, Uniform Rules of the Alaska Legislature must be amended since the Uniform Rules govern the method of abstaining. (See [HCR 12, 16, 18](#)) There has already been lively debate on this subject.

2008 will be a busy year for ethics legislation again. The House Judiciary Committee chair, Representative Ramras, decided last week to group all ethics bills together for the purpose of a hearing or hearings.

- Joyce Anderson

LWV Anchorage 2007-08 Board of Directors

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Contact us at 907-274-8477
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YOUR HELP NEEDED... 2008 MUNICIPAL BALLOT REVIEW

We anticipate doing the Municipal Ballot Review again this year. This is a short term intensive project which begins as soon as the Assembly has finalized the ballot issues (Feb. 12) and goes to the printer probably around the first week in March. Committee members factually present the issues to be on the ballot. Most of the material will be available on the internet, but internet access is not essential; we will provide copies of the Ordinances. While most of the proofing will be done individually, the committee will hold 3-4 meetings. If you'd like to participate, please contact **Pat Redmond** at 240-5585, 243-6344 or plredmond@acsalaska.net or **Carol Dickason** at 278-6343 or caroldickason@gci.net

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

LWV Alaska State Convention
March 28 - 30, 2008, Anchorage YWCA



LWV Anchorage Annual Meeting
6-8 pm April 24, 2008, BP Energy Center