



The League of Women Voters of Utah

3804 Highland Drive, Suite 8-D,
Salt Lake City, UT 84106

(801) 272-8683
Email: lwvut@xmission.com

<http://www.lwvutah.org>

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How Do We See Ourselves?



by Jenn Gonnely, LWVUT Co-president

Welcome to February, an incredibly busy month in Utah with the Utah State Legislature in session. Your legislative co-directors, Angie Abram and Nickie Nelson, with the help of their many Legislative Corps volunteers, will do their best to keep you all informed of the goings on at the Capitol. Lola and I will also do our best to weigh in often with the Legislature to share the League's positions and our background studies that have brought us to these positions. We hope that the League is called on often for our expertise and positions. This can be a high profile month for the League of Women Voters of Utah.

As I contemplate how to best represent the League, I think back to an email I received just a few days before the end of 2014. The author, not a League member, said that he has "a respect for the League of Women Voters in general." But being aware that we had a low response rate from candidates to our League Voters Guide, he stated his concern about our image.

"What I suggest that you do is to rename the League, in Utah, to be 'The Utah League of Informed Voters.' This name change would be important for the League to sound like what it really is, not just an organization for women about women's issues, but a league that tells voters where the candidates stand."

When I read that email I had an inkling of what had prompted it. While he may well have been thinking about our Voters Guide ever since its release last September and had only now come up with the solution, I suspected it had more to do with a statement issued by U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise the day before. You may recall that Rep. Scalise was confronted by *The Times-Picayune* about speaking at a white nationalist conference in 2002. In his statement he said:

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“I don't support some of the things I have read about this group. I don't support any of the things I have read about this group, but I spoke to a lot of groups during that period. I went all throughout South Louisiana.

“I spoke to the League of Women Voters, a pretty liberal group. ... I still went and spoke to them. I spoke to any group that called, and there were a lot of groups calling. “

So, is that it? Do we have an image problem? Are we the far-left organization with which candidates don't want to participate? I know this is not the first time this has come up and I suspect it will not be the last. In fact, a caucus was called at the LWWUS convention in 2006 to discuss the matter of changing our name so that it would better reflect the diverse nature of our membership. A resolution brought by the caucus to the floor failed.

Elisabeth McNamara, President, LWWUS weighed in on Rep. Scalise's comments.

["Representative Steve Scalise's recent comments](#) regarding the League of Women Voters were misinformed. We are committed to working for all voters regardless of their party affiliation. We believe voters are the basis of our strong democracy, and we're committed to making our government work for all citizens. We will continue to fight for inclusion and tolerance and are committed to Making Democracy Work®." To read full statement go to <http://lww.org/press-releases/league-women-voters-united-states-responds-comments-rep-scalise>

What's in a name? This is a question as old as time. William Shakespeare contemplated it when talking about roses. Today expensive advertising firms wrap a whole business model around a name. It's called branding. But I say it all comes down to us — each one of us and how we conduct ourselves. I happily stand by the League's name. I take comfort in its brilliant and long history. I appreciate that the fight for women's participation in politics is still a fight. Women may vote regularly at a higher rate than men, but we are still dramatically underrepresented in Congress (19.4 percent), Utah statewide offices (0 percent) and at the Utah State Legislature (15.4 percent).

So, what do we do? We pay attention to bills proposed at the Legislature but not to which political parties propose them. We participate in the process by talking to our legislators about how we feel about these pieces of legislation with civility and facts and leave behind rhetoric. We share our knowledge with our friends and our neighbors while taking time to listen to their opinions as well.

I challenge us all to leave aside the labels, even the standard ones of Republican and Democrat, and just think about the legislation. Maybe if we leave the labels alone others will stop labelling us and let us get on with our very valuable task of Making Democracy Work®.

Utah League Co-presidents

Lola Britton

lolabritton@comcast.net

&

Jenn Gonnely

jenn@gonnely.com

Executive Director

Emeritus

Sandy Peck

sandypeck@xmission.com

Office Manager

Beatrix "Trixi" Seiger

lwwut@xmission.com

Corporate Tax Rate Could Be Lowered

by Marilyn O'Dell, Study Chair

We're in the home stretch with our tax study. By the time you read this *Voter* most local Leagues will have had consensus meetings. Be sure to read the Discussion Guide before the meeting. You'll find it on our homepage lwvutah.org. We hope it is a help.

As I write this, I have made an inquiry to Sen. Deidre Henderson, R-Spanish Fork, about neighboring states that have recently reduced their corporate tax rates. In an article in the *Standard Examiner* she states that she is considering a bill to reduce Utah's 5 percent corporate tax rate because neighboring states are reducing theirs. I haven't received an answer from Sen. Henderson yet.

The information in the study was taken from a 2011 Utah State Tax Commission report. The website of the Tax Foundation shows 2014 corporate tax rates by state. The only neighboring state that has a lower rate than Utah is Colorado at 4.63 percent. However, Nevada and Wyoming have no corporate taxes.

I'll be expecting consensus reports to be sent to me at maodell2@gmail.com by February 4. If you can send them a little earlier it will give the Tax Study Committee members time to digest the local League's thoughts. After we present our report to the LWVUT Board, the committee will be disbanded. However, if you have any comments about how the study's content or the consensus questions send them to me and I'll pass them on to the board.

Look for a revised position statement on Utah taxes in the next *Voter*.

Immigration Reform Topic of Community Luncheon



Bishop John Charles Wester, bishop of the Catholic Salt Lake Diocese and Utah, will be our keynote speaker at the League's State of the Community Luncheon. Take note! There has been a change of date for the luncheon. It will now be on Tuesday, April 28.

His topic will be "Immigration Reform." He has traveled through many countries, including third world countries, witnessed diverse cultures, visited the poorest of the poor and worked toward immigration reform on local, national and international levels. Bishop Wester has served on many committees locally, nationally and internationally regarding immigrants and itinerant people. His address at our luncheon should make for a very educational and memorable day.

Local League Presidents

Cache County
Joan McLean

jmclean@cc.usu.edu

Cedar City
Barbara Prestwich

barb.prestwich@hotmail.com

Davis County
Nelda Bishop

nelda@xmission.com

& Kathy Stockel

khs_nodak@yahoo.com

Grand County
Cynthia Smith

cjs@manzanasprings.com

Salt Lake
Janice Gygi

janice.gygi@uvu.edu

& Karen McCoy

mcfro45@msn.com

Weber County
Terri McCulloch

terrimcculloch@aol.com

Have you ever wondered?

Who are my state legislators?
Does The Utah State Legislature have a web site?
What bills are my legislator sponsoring or supporting?
Does my opinion matter to my legislator?
How do I contact him or her?

**Make a difference when you contact your legislator!
Come to the League of Women Voters of Utah**

**Advocacy Lobby Training & Legislative Orientation
Noon on Monday, January 26
Utah State East Senate Building, Copper Room**

The Utah League of Women Voters legislative corps follows legislation and interacts with the Utah Legislature during each session. We advocate for or against bills according to our consensus positions and need volunteers to watch specific areas and identify opportunities to make the League's voice heard. If you haven't observed the Legislature before and are thinking you can make a difference consider joining us at a Legislative Orientation and give experienced League members a chance to ease you in gently. We will discuss how the Legislature works and how League interacts with it. We'll be giving you tips on how to follow the 2015 Session. On the 26th, attendees are encouraged to purchase lunch in the nearby cafeteria and bring it to the Copper Room before our orientation starts at noon.

**Legislative Corps Wednesday Lunch
Every Wednesday of the Session at Noon
Utah State Capitol Cafeteria, East Senate Building**

During the 2015 Legislative session, Legislative Action Corps members meet in the cafeteria each Wednesday at noon to discuss session highlights and any league positions that pertain to upcoming legislation. This is also a time to request League Presidents to testify on behalf of League positions. Newcomers are welcome. Observing committees is a good way to learn about the legislature and the process. Feel free to double up at committee meetings. Just walk in and look for an LWV button.

**Annual Legislative Brown Bag Luncheon,
Noon on Friday, February 13
Olmstead Room, East Senate Building**

Join us for our Annual Legislative Luncheon to hear legislators discuss their expectations and priorities for the session, with an opportunity to ask them questions. Purchase your lunch in the Senate Building cafeteria beginning at

First Call to Convention 2015

May 9-10

Pencil in May 9 and 10 on your calendar for the Utah League annual convention in Moab. The Grand County League is our host. A dinner and an exciting guest speaker (to be confirmed) will be the Friday night program. The Friday dinner is open to League members and guests. On Saturday, we will adopt program, elect officers and have some interesting workshops. 'Tis is a great time to reconnect and meet new League members from several Utah Leagues.

Moab is a busy place. If you are considering attending, start looking for reservations now.

Watch for more information in the next *Voter*.

11:30 and bring it to the Olmstead Room (in the same building) to hear our speakers at noon.

We Need a More Diverse Membership

by Marilyn O'Dell, Membership and Leadership Development Coach

Would you as a League member invite someone to join who has political views that differ from yours or who belonged to a different religion? I hope that your answer is, "Of course. We need to welcome everyone."

I'm writing this article because I am the MLD coach for the Salt Lake League. During our December teleconference, Janice Gygi mentioned that she thought that some members are not very welcoming to those who practice a different religion. This rang a bell for me because I've noticed how we sometimes disparage those we don't agree with. This happens most often when we think we're with a group that were confident agrees with us. But what we feel comfortable doing in a League Board meeting may also surface in a general membership meeting or other League function.

It's comfortable to socialize with those who think as we do. It's comfortable but it leads to complacency and makes us think that we are 100% right and that there's no other way that could be right. For an organization that seeks to grow our membership it's a defeatist strategy. We need to be open to members with different ideas.

When I suggested this article, Jenn Gonnely replied, "I challenge us all to stop thinking in broad generalizations like Republican, Democrat, Mormon, young, etc. and welcome everyone into our group."

I would love to start a dialogue in the *Voter* on this subject.

Cathy Howick 1146 North
Taffeta Dr SLC 84116
801-364-8628 cathy.howick@gmail.com

Cathy Howick is from Pennsylvania but has called Utah home since 1973. She taught 3rd, 4th and 5th grade in the elementary school system in Pennsylvania, then worked in Washington DC for GEICO Insurance Co as a claims adjuster. While working for GEICO she was transferred to San Francisco. Her expertise in the insurance industry led to working to the Utah Department of Insurance as an investigator. Since retiring Cathy has volunteered on various political campaigns, and volunteered at Washington Elementary School helping student with math and reading. Cathy is especially interested in education and the legislative process.

Mary Kay O. Lazarus 3075 E. Kennedy Drive, #312 SLC 84108



Get on Board with the League

by Marilyn O'Dell, LWVUT
Nominating Chair

At Convention in May, members will be voting on several new board members. We encourage members to offer to run for a position. Please let me know if you're interested.

The League cannot thrive or even exist without good leaders. It's a great way to learn more about the League and get better acquainted with other fabulous League members. Watch the *Voter* next month for more specific information.

801-328.8899 mkl@mkpr.com

Mary Kay is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Goucher College (BA), Boston University (MA), and the University of Utah (Ph.D) in French Language and Literature. She taught French at Westminster College for five years before taking a position with the Development Office at the College and becoming an active member of the Utah community. Founder of the Vivaldi Candlelight Concert and the Utah Women's Forum, Mary Kay served as Chair of the first Sundance Film Festival, on the Board of Trustees of the Governor's Mansion, And the Utah Arts Festival, among other chairmanships. Currently she is planning the 10th Annual McCarthy Family Lecture Series: In Praise of Independent Journalism, heading fundraising efforts for the Sego Lily at the Draw at Sugar House, and serving as consultant and ambassador for a French documentary film company in Paris.

Trixi Sieger 734 So Gudgell Court SLC 84111
801-835-4644 tsieger@techforpeople.net

Trixi is the new office manager for the League of Women Voters of Utah and Salt Lake. She grew up mainly in the Dallas area. Trixi graduated from the University of Utah in Mass Communications and Public Relations. For the last 9 years she was employed with The Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority (UHEAA) and previously worked in Scotland, UK. Trixi has volunteered for Wasatch Community Gardens, Planned Parenthood, Bioneers, Tree Utah, Utah Clean Energy and the Utah Arts Festival. Outside of work she enjoys hiking and camping, theater arts, book club meetings, international travel and spending time with her husband and 4 year old son. She is enthusiastic about the League's vision of keeping democracy alive in the community as well as providing education and outreach.

Legislative Panel Addresses Prisoner rehabilitation

by Anne Zeigler

On January 10 the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the League of Women Voter of Salt Lake City (LWVSL) co-sponsored a legislative panel for which the



Hinckley Forums

are held in Orson Spencer Hall, Room 255, at the University of Utah. All forums are free and open to the public and are sponsored by the Hinckley Institute of Politics and The Sam Rich Program in International Politics.

<http://www.hinckley.utah.edu/events/forums/index.html>

AAUW chose the panelists. They chose two Republicans and two Democrats, with one panelist from each party being a woman. The panelists were:

- Carol Spackman Moss (D) House District 37
- **Jim Dabakis (D) Senate District 2**
- Daniel Thatcher (R) Senate District 12
- Dana Layton (R), formerly House District 60
-

Questions were taken from the audience which consisted of members of both AAUW and LWVSL. The questions started with, "Of what importance is the support system for the prison (families, volunteers, staff, etc.) in deciding a future location of the prison?" Many were pleased that all panelists recognized the importance of rehabilitation programs and accessibility for families and volunteers.



When asked about the research going on at our universities, i.e, the University of Utah interdisciplinary program to improve air quality, all of the panelists expressed their concern about improving air quality.

Other important questions related to Medicaid expansion, education and higher education, police handling of critical situations, campaign financing, and the Swallow/Shurtleff scandal.

Join us for State of the Union bingo!

LWVUS will be tracking how the president's agenda matches up with League priorities! We hope the speech addresses our policy priorities – including protecting and engaging voters, reforming money in politics and defending our environment. [#SOTU #LWV](#)

<http://lwv.org/c.../join-league-women-voters-state-union-bingo>

Mental Health Panel To Tackle Issues

Mark your calendars and invite friends and family to our Mental Health Services for SLCC panel discussion with a group of professionals in the field. February 11 6-8:30 p.m. at the Girl Scout Headquarters 445 E. 4500 South, Salt Lake City.

Mental health is a critical issue for the community. Utah's prison and jails are overflowing with inmates, many of whom suffer from some sort of mental illness. The same is true for the homeless, the uninsured and underinsured.

Hope to see you there.
— Vickie Samuelson



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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government.