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# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

## MEPH

Minnetonka Eden Prairie Hopkins

Nov/Dec 2011

# The Voter

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters  
Minnetonka / Eden Prairie / Hopkins

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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### LWV MEPH Holiday Party December 15

#### LWV MEPH HOLIDAY PARTY

*A social gathering for members and friends*

5:00-8:00PM on Thursday, Dec. 15, 2011

Condo Party Room at 14601 Atrium Way, Minnetonka, MN 55345

The LWV Minnetonka/Eden Prairie/Hopkins Annual Holiday Party will be held the evening of Thursday, Dec. 15, 2011. The festivities begin at 5:00pm. Bev Montgomery will be hosting this at her condo's party room which is at ground level toward the back of the building. This is a potluck party. Please RSVP to Bev at 952-931-0805 or [bevmontgomery@comcast.net](mailto:bevmontgomery@comcast.net). All members and friends and potential members of LWV MEPH are welcome!

### Meeting Review: CMAL Oct. 15 - The New Metropolitan Council

Our first speaker was Kim Kang who is on the CMAL Board and is also a member of the Metropolitan Council Land Use Advisory Committee and the Transportation Accessibility Committee. She explained what CMAL is and does. There are 19 local leagues in seven counties. The CMAL Board has 25 "delegates" from local leagues.

CMAL works to address Government Issues of Metro concern; among them land use, transportation & transit, housing, parks & open spaces and water quality. It sponsors quarterly programs, monitors Metropolitan (Met) Council meetings, shares CMAL positions with decision makers and provides local leagues and the public with information on area-wide issues. This year in response to member concerns and because 16 of the 17 members of the Met Council are newly appointed by Governor Dayton (but not yet confirmed by the Legislature) the emphasis is on the Met Council and what it does. Kim recommended the book *REGION Planning the Future of the Twin Cities* by Myron Orfield and Thomas F. Luce, Jr. There are 5 copies of this book available to be checked out in the Hennepin County Library system and one reference copy at the Minneapolis Central Library.

Our second and featured speaker was Jennifer Munt, Met Council Member, District 3 which includes Eden Prairie, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Minnetonka and other western suburbs. She injected humor into her talk by describing the Met Council's responsibilities as, "Buses, flushes and a whole lot more." The GOAL is to help make the 7 county region competitive and livable. The MISSION is to plan for orderly and economic development of the 7 county Metro area and coordinate services that any one city or county could not effectively provide.

The Met Council was created in 1967 by Charlie Weaver, Sr. In 1994 the Met Council combined with the Metro Transit Commission, the Regional Transit Board and the Metro Waste Control Commission to form the entity which exists today. It consists of 17 members appointed by the Governor. The Chair serves at large and the others each have a district. The 7 counties represented are Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington. It operates the regional waste water system (making sure our water is safe); the regional transit system (there are 91 million riders per year) and the Metro HRA (covering affordable housing and Section 8 vouchers. 7000 families are on the waiting list and the wait is 8 years).

In monitoring water quality it works with cities and with the Pollution Control Agency. It is sensitive to run-off both residential and farm. Responding to a question after her presentation she was asked about the relationship of the Met Council to the Watershed Districts. She responded that they try not to duplicate, and work together with all layers of government. An example she gave was a parking lot sited very near Lake Minnetonka. The parking lot is paved with material which will absorb the oil left by cars thus protecting the lake.

In transit considerations, if a family could use only 1 car they could save \$7,000.00 a year. BUT it must be a dependable transit system to give up the second car and use public transportation. Budget cuts to the Transit budget result in cuts to bus service. When a family buys or rents a home depending on using the transit for that second car cutting becomes a hardship. Ms. Munt discussed in detail the Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) which will provide 14 miles of light rail. It has received 30% of the Federal funding for the design phase. Construction should begin in 2014 and service should begin in 2018. She believes the funds were received partly because of the success of the Hiawatha LRT.

Planning is a big part of the Met Council's tasks. There is long range comprehensive planning, regional transportation planning and regional park planning. The Met Council does not manage parks but does provide grants. An important part of the Met Council is its Research of census data which helps individual cities make good choices. In development Ms. Munt discussed the graphic of a three legged stool where the legs are the Met Council, the city involved and the developer. She stated, "Development doesn't happen to us, it happens with us.

The 2011 Revenue of the Met Council is \$756 million: State Funds, 35%; Waste Water, 28%; Bus, 14%; Property tax, 9%; Federal Funds 11%; Other 3%. Because the revenue sources are diverse (only 35% from the State) the Met Council was not so affected by the recent government shutdown of 20 days. The 2011 Expenditure is \$761 million (only 5 million over); Transportation, 47%; Environmental service, 15%; Debt service, 19%; Local community grants, 13 %; Planning & Administration, 6%.

Ms. Munt was originally hired as an outreach coordinator under Ted Mondale. Eventually there were 5 outreach coordinators. Now there are none. These positions formed liaisons between communities and the Met Council. However it does sound like the new Met Council members are getting out into communities and are reporting back at their meetings. "Hearing from the customers". She emphasized that we need to tell our leaders what we need - not complaining but finding viable solutions. One needs to know the people one serves!!

This Met Council has developed strategic planning goals to double transit funding by 2030 and integrate land use and transportation by plugging the development cities want into the light rail stations.

Geneva MacMillan, the new president of CMAL, announced the remaining quarterly meetings: **January 21<sup>st</sup>** will be a panel of commissioners from Anoka, Scott and Washington counties to discuss how they relate to the Met Council; **March 17<sup>th</sup>**; **May 19<sup>th</sup>** will be the Annual Meeting. One idea for a meeting is a panel of citizens discussing how the Met Council and other governmental agencies affect them and meet their needs. Members are urged to express their ideas as to meeting topics. Geneva and the State League person are in the process of compiling the roster. It should be ready in 3 to 4 weeks and will be snail mailed. There was also a discussion of how to communicate with the CMAL Board and the local leagues and individuals. At present Facebook is an option. The Board will be discussing this.

Submitted by Margaret Nelson and Geneva MacMillan

## Meeting Review: LWV W. Metro Nov. 5 - LWVUS Education Study

The November 5th meeting was sponsored by the LWV West Metro Alliance and hosted by LWV St Louis Park. Panelists were **Dr. Nicola A. Alexander**, (an Assoc. Prof. in Dept of Organizational Leadership, Policy & Development at U. of MN. whose area of expertise is in education finance) and **Dr. Angie Eilers** (whose areas of expertise include education reform, policy implementation and effectiveness, and post-secondary attainment).

They both spoke to the LWVUS Education Study which includes the following areas under the role of the federal government in public education (pre K through grade 12): the history, funding and equity issues which are addressed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act; and the common core standards/assessments which are required for many federal grant programs but are national, not federal

**Dr. Alexander** titled her opening remarks as Funding, Fairness, and the Feds. She noted that in 1964 Federal funds given to education amounted to 5% and by 2010 it had increased to 10% (no inflation is taken into account). One might consider need based, (primary role of Feds is to support need), output based (primary role is to reward output and/or effort based (primary role is to reward effort) funding. She discussed policy instruments and the underlying assumptions that flow from them: Examples:

### Policy Instruments

Mandates (do as I say; regulations with consequences not necessarily dollars)

System change (change who is in charge)

Hortatory (when you know what's good for you , you will do it

### Assumptions that system will improve

If system actors follow rules

If we change who is in charge

If we inform people of the right thing to do

She also discussed the purpose of Education (based on Mitchell & Mitchell), whether to produce students like “durable goods” (skills are technical and mainly accrue to students) or students who are “human capital” (skills taught are technical and largely accrue to society as productive workforce), or to provide direct service experience (skills taught are largely social and mainly enjoyed by students and educators) or to produce cultural legacy (where the skills taught are largely social for socializing children into a democratic society; benefits accrue to broader community).

In conclusion she stated that, “Fairness depends on what you value and how you think that value (resources or outputs) should be distributed.”

Dr. Eilers spoke of the Common Core Standards which are meant as an end goal to college or career readiness. They have been developed by governors and state education officers. It is not federal. The Standards are minimums to be taught/learned. Standards have been developed for English -Language Arts (44 states have adopted them) and Math (43 states). MN has not accepted the standards for Math as MN feels their standards are higher. Science is in draft form and perhaps will be ready in 2012-2013. Social Studies standards ???. As an aside, one of the questioners at the end of the panel (a Social Studies teacher) expressed hope that they never put in place the ones so far discussed.

Some other points Dr. Eilers made included the statement that poverty is often divided by zipcodes and the mother's level of education. On the other hand, students have used resilience and expectations/persistence to overcome the above statement.

In the question period both speakers discussed how other countries value education and the support given to families and the amount of taxes other countries are willing to pay for the values they espouse. The U.S. is a much more “individualist” country and programs in those countries discussed would not be tolerated in the U.S. at least at this time.

Submitted by Margaret Nelson

**Video link: <http://vimeo.com/31743595>. Power point slides are posted on [www.lwvmeph.org](http://www.lwvmeph.org).**

## LWV MEPH Meeting Review 9/17 : Discussion with Maria Ruud on Making a Difference

Our speaker was Maria Ruud, a former MN Representative, who led a discussion of how citizens can make a difference. She reminded us that Elections matter. In her local district in which she received 107 fewer votes than her opponent, 1000 fewer votes were cast. There was a lot of negative campaigning which depresses votes.

City elections are this November and State and National elections are next Fall. As Maria talked the audience asked questions and volunteered suggestions. It was a lively discussion. Below are points that impressed me.

Bill Moyers has stated that the only answer to organized money is organized people.

We need to especially involve young people.

What can citizens do to be informed:

- Contact your representative
- Watch a Hearing
- Reach out to the public and build coalitions
- Join groups that “share your passion”
- Write Letters to the Editor to local papers not just the Star Tribune. Don’t worry if your letter is not published. If editors get enough letters on a topic they know there is interest and may cover the issue better. They may only publish one letter on a topic.
- To bring up bills being considered: On [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) type Minnesota Legislature bills (Note: I bring up this search engine because one can contribute to the National LWV by using this, rather than just “google”. I tried to get money for our local league but no dice, so I have “settled” for the National!!)

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." by Margaret Mead.

Maria brought up a new legislative “way” – governing by constitutional amendment. On the ballot this November is whether Marriage is only between a man and a woman.

Ballot measures for Photo Voter ID and the proposition that only a supermajority of the House and Senate may raise taxes will probably pass the legislature in 2012 and be placed on the ballot in Fall, 2012. The Governor does not have the power to veto these measures. When passed by the Legislature they go directly to the popular vote. How the ballot questions are stated is very important. This is where we might be able to have an effect on the outcome. Watch debates; write letters to counteract.

Redistricting by the Court will not be done until March. Precinct caucuses are scheduled for February. At that time prospective candidates won’t know in which district they live.

See the humanity in everyone.

Submitted by Margaret Nelson

## New LWV MEPH Members

MEPH has added several brand new members this year.

All have expressed a long time interest in League of Women Voters and the positive impact they know league makes in the community. And most have joined because a neighbor or friend encouraged it! **Denise Beusen, Joanna Callahan, and (Mary) Beret Hagen are our newest members.** Plan to come to the holiday party to greet our new members and bring along a friend who might become a member.

Submitted by Bev Montgomery, Membership Chair

Lauren Gilchrist, Assistant Commissioner for Health Policy and Reform for MN spoke on the topic of Opportunities for Innovation and Leadership. She had also spoken at our Annual Meeting last May. She brought us up-to-date especially on how her department is implementing the Affordable Care Act. There was much audience participation.

90% of Minnesotans are covered by health insurance.

Small businesses have health care concerns that keep them from hiring.

Between the public and private sectors MN spends 35 Billion dollars on health care.

Though MN is doing well we still need to improve/increase value and decrease costs. We need to know where the money is going and what we get for it.

Up to now health plans have been leading the way. Governor Dayton has now introduced competitive bidding in re-evaluating Medicaid.

Health reform cost is a big part but we must not sacrifice quality

The Affordable Health Care Act (which is deficit neutral) was passed in Spring, 2010. It has a triple aim of healthier communities, decreased costs and high quality. In Sept. 2010, 6 months after passage, many parts affecting many people have kicked in.

1. Medicare Part D doughnut hole. 64,000 Minnesotans were in the "gap". In 2010 seniors who qualified were given \$250.00 checks. In 2011 50% of the cost will be rebated to them. There will be a transition to eventually close the gap.

2. Early retirees will get coverage thru their former employers. 65,000 are in this situation. Maybe ½ can get coverage thru this. This is an incentive for employers who wish to do the right thing.

3. Young adults up to age 27 can stay on parents' employer based coverage.

Jan., 2013 states **must** begin working on a Health Care Exchange so that it is in place Jan., 2014. The Exchange will create requirements for insurance to be transparent. Exchanges can't turn people away so they will have essential health care benefits. MN can create its own Exchange, **OR** the Federal Government will create one for MN. MN has data on disease so it is to our advantage to create our own Exchange. MN is striving for 98% coverage. No one will pay more than 9% of their income in premiums which will be paid thru their taxes.

The Office of the Inspector General is focusing on those gaming the system.

MN has been proactive. In 2007 the Health Care Home model was created. 1,000,000 Minnesotans are enrolled in clinics which handle all their health problems. The clinics deal especially with chronic diseases and are a "one-stop shop" where all the patient's information is consolidated and the patient deals with one source of information rather than trying to talk to each specialist. Options are discussed and questions answered. The Mayo Clinic and Park Nicollet have been doing this for years.

One thing the Department of Human Services is trying to be proactive in is the Age Wave. The Long Term Care situation; staying in one's home; services to be provided; how to pay for it when most people deny it will happen to them!!! A suggestion has been premiums on a sliding scale.

Submitted by Margaret Nelson

## Bouquets



A big bouquet for Margaret Nelson who provided most of the articles for this issue!

### MEPH's Classy Lady

One of our own members has spent this year in a demonstration of supreme citizenship: running for a governmental office. Peggy Kvam filed to become a city council member in Ward 1 for Minnetonka. She organized a well run campaign with truthful information, participated in the candidate forum and walked miles and talked to nearly every citizen in the precinct. In preparation for the office she attended City Council meetings for months and made sure she was well informed in all city issues. Peggy's extreme preparation for this position demonstrated that she was not only well-qualified, but that she would make an excellent council member. In a light turnout on election day, she was not elected. Peggy's interview the night of election demonstrated not only class but remarkable coolness in smilingly responding in a positive way to questions from a reporter. Prediction: Peggy will run again and Peggy will one day serve her city in ways to make a difference. Members of MEPH can share in the pride that Peggy should feel for her great effort and preparation. We are so proud of you, Peggy!

Bev Montgomery

## Looking Ahead

Th, 12/15, 5PM	LWV MEPH Holiday Party, hosted by Bev Montgomery, 14601 Atrium Way, Minnetonka, MN 55345
Sa, 1/14 9:30AM	LWV MEPH: Presentation by Lori Sturdeyvant from the Minneapolis Star Tribune
Sa 1/21 9:30AM	CMAL County Commissioner Panel: Scott, Anoka and Washington Counties, Richfield City Hall
Sa, 2/11 9:30AM	LWV MEPH: Kim Labo, "Toxic Substances in Our World"
Sa 3/17 9:30AM	CMAL quarterly meeting, tbd location
Sa 5/19 9:30AM	CMAL annual meeting, tbd location



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**Want Clout? VOTE!**