



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

December 2007

President: Pat Walter
President-Elect: Patte Newman
Secretary: Peggy Struwe
Treasurer: Corrie Kielty-Wesely
Voter Editor: Jim Johnson

Calendar of Events

December 20 (Thursday): Noon
Lunch & Learn,
US Bank Bldg 20th Floor,
13th & M.
Guest: Mary Jane Nielsen,
author of *A Street Named 'O'*.
See article at right.

January 15 (Tuesday): 7:00 p.m.
The Death Penalty:
Retain or Abolish,
Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street
See article on page 2.

January 17 (Thursday): Noon
Lunch & Learn,
US Bank Bldg 20th Floor,
13th & M.
Guest: W. Don Nelson,
Publisher of *Prairie Fire*

January 24 (Thursday): 5 - 7 p.m.
LWVLL Open House
Hawley Bed & Breakfast,
545 N 25th Street
Refreshments provided

March 31 (Monday): Time TBA
Debates, St Paul UMC
Details TBA

Mary Jane Nielsen to Speak at December 20th Lunch & Learn

Lincoln author Mary Jane Nielsen will discuss her books *A Street Named 'O'* and recently released *Life in Lincoln...As We Remember It* at the League of Women Voters' Lunch and Learn. The luncheon, open to the public, will be held Thursday, December 20 at noon on the 20th floor of the US Bank Building, 13th and M Streets. The cost is \$8.00 and includes lunch, tax and gratuity. Reservations are required by noon Monday, December 17 and may be made by contacting the League Office by e-mail at LWVLL@neb.rr.com or by phone at 475-1411. Include your name, the number of reservations requested along with your phone number or e-mail address.

Nielsen, a community-minded entrepreneur and life-long Lincoln resident, believes in preserving stories of life in our community. In addition to *A Street Named 'O'* and *Life in Lincoln*, Nielsen also produced *From Soup to Nuts*, an area restaurants' cookbook. She is vice-president of NECO Security and involved in many community organizations.

The League of Women Voters' Lunch & Learn events are held on the third Thursday of each month from September through May, at noon on the 20th floor of the US Bank Building, 13th and M Streets. All luncheons are open to the public with advance reservations. The January 17 Lunch & Learn speaker will be W. Don Nelson discussing his most recent endeavor as publisher of *Prairie Fire*, a new monthly periodical.

Seward League Needs Our Help

The Seward League of Women Voters has arranged a meeting with Senator Adams regarding a very important issue. Keystone Pipeline is buying up property land-use rights all the way through Nebraska from north to south, very quietly and very swiftly. One of the cities it is going to go through is Seward and our Mighty Seward League

began asking some very pointed questions, to the consternation of the Keystone people.

The burning issue is that the pipeline is centered over our aquifer, and there are serious questions about future contamination of this valuable water source as well as the future land rights of individual land owners along this pipeline.

The meeting is scheduled for this Monday, December 17, at 10:30 am in Lincoln...exact meeting place TBA, but probably in Senator Adams' office or elsewhere in the Capitol. Check with the Senator's staff for the exact location when you get to the Capitol.

SEWARD NEEDS OUR HELP! We need League representation at this meeting, especially from members who have any knowledge of natural resource issues, but anybody is welcome to attend.



Death Penalty Forum January 15.

Mark your calendars now to attend

The Death Penalty: Retain or Abolish?

Tuesday, January 15, 2008,
7:00 p.m.

Unitarian Church of Lincoln
6300 A Street, Lincoln

Featuring:

J. Kirk Brown, Solicitor General, Nebraska Department of Justice, advocating retention
Alan Peterson, Attorney, Cline Williams Wright Johnson & Oldfather, advocating abolition

A question and answer period will follow opening statements by the speakers.

Your Lunch and Learn Committee has worked diligently to make this forum a reality and open it to the public without charge. It is co-sponsored by:

- League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County Education Fund
- First-Plymouth Congregational Church United Church of Christ Peace and Justice Team
- Unitarian Church of Lincoln Social Action Committee.

Do Women Really Matter?

By Patte Newman

You have to wonder in light of the recent Supreme Court case ruling that a Goodyear worker was not entitled to wages men earn for the same job (based on some Alito-logic (or is it elitism) of this very male-majority black-robed gaggle of judicial "wisdom."

You have to wonder In light of the recent 'revelation' that we (locally, state and nationally) do not need the Women's Commission, with our own Lancaster County Commission — de-funded instead of defended by the City Council and County Board. The State Women's Commission went through its own very ugly stay of execution over the past year -- until it was brutally bludgeoned to death by defunding this spring along with a very public humiliation of the executive director. The Bush regime did away with the seat at the federal table with the Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach, taking enormous strides backwards from the progress of the Clinton years.

You have to wonder in light of statistics from the Institute for Women's Policy Research that tell us Nebraska is 3rd in nation for the percentage of women in labor force (67%) but 49th in nation for women in managerial and professional occupations and ranked 23rd in nation for the percentage of women with four or more years college but 44th in nation for earnings ratio to men in full time employment (at 71 cents for every male dollar).

What is a person to think? Do women really have to rip off their thirty dollar Victoria's Secret lace pop-up bras and burn them to get some attention on real issues here?

We live in a state ranked 31st in the country in terms of women holding elective office. While some of my best friends happen to be males, this is very sad for a representative democracy (that should, technically, be "representative"). Not to mention a Patriarchic high court and judiciary.

For anyone too young to remember, a short review of two arguments used against the original Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) for women may be in order. (Was the brand name "ERA" for laundry detergent coined as another subtle corporate reminder to women that they need to concentrate on domestic duties and not board rooms?) There were

concerns that awarding women rights equal to men would create so much equality that this nation would be sending American women and mothers to fight on foreign soil right next to men. "Oops" on that one. Women have joined minorities in having the honor of dying for their country overseas while still having to overcome barriers at home. Conventional wisdom said women who actually earn less than men can remedy this and legally enforce equity through the Court system. Well, "oops" again (see paragraph #1).

Is that ERA wheel turning or is the little hamsterette dead? Is there a need for a Women's Commission? Is there a need for women in elected positions? Have the efforts of the suffragettes working from the mid 1800's to earn women the right to vote in the 1920's, continuing through the 1960's with NOW members marching in the streets for equal rights in the 1970's really been successful when we still hear terms like "barefoot and pregnant" "glass ceiling" and "feminazis".

We can be proud to live in a state which was one of the first states to ratify the ERA (although the legislature also later rescinded that vote). We can be proud to live in a state with a history that showed a dependence on the strong will, determination and courage of pioneering women who helped break an untilled prairie. Those women had no pedestal to climb down from because they were working side-by-side with their husbands and children.

Most of us have our own story to tell. I can tell of being treated as chattel in Europe in 1977 when I married, moved to Switzerland and wanted to open a bank account there in my own name. The Swiss bank couldn't set it up for me as an equal partner to my husband. It was his account and I had signature rights to it although it was my salary. Women in that country were only given the right to vote in 1971 but quickly enacted their own equal rights amendment in 1985. They've passed us by and the USA is a third world country in comparison.

Can women in this country gain ground in the battle for equal pay, equal rights and an equal voice? We live in a time when constitutional amendments are proposed to ban gay marriage and to ban burning flags but still cannot muster up the

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votes to give women equal status to men? Can we, as Nebraskans and Americans work for true equality for ALL human beings, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation OR sex?

Here's what I believe needs to happen in this country.

We need to educate people that ANY fundamentalist religion that oppresses women is no less a threat here at home than it is abroad. That being a wife does not mean being a doormat, that rape is violence NOT sex. We need to remember that blind faith in bad leadership is not patriotism, that if we want peace we need to work for justice. We need to remember that there IS NO damage deposit to the environment - that we are the stewards of the world we leave our grandchildren and they will have to pay that price if we mess up.

We need a tolerance of non-conformity and to encourage and NOT discourage diverse opinion.

We NEED more women running this country. I do NOT believe that a female-led government would send our sons and daughters to fight or die in a foreign war without a plan to get troops safely

home. I do NOT believe that profits would be placed above people or that corporate interests would trump human interests. I believe a female majority in power would understand that a child's well-being is important even AFTER that child is born. And, I believe that a female led congress might understand that healthcare funding should include preventative screenings like mammograms right along with prescriptions for Viagra.

I believe that the emphasis would be on education and on human rights, human services and on human dignity.

We need to get involved, stay involved, find our common ground, speak in one voice and make our priorities clear.

We have come a long way, baby. But we have a long way to go.

LWVLL Open House!

Hawley Bed & Breakfast, 545 N. 25th Street,
Lincoln

Thursday, January 24, 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Refreshments Provided. Bring a friend!

The 2008 Winter Lecture Series at the Unitarian Church Africa: Challenge and Hope

January 20, 2008: Professor Robert Hitchcock, Chair of Anthropology at Michigan State University, will give the keynote entitled "Emerging Africa, Development, Democracy, and Environmental Change."

January 27: Professor Betty Levitov of Doane College will discuss seeing Africa through the eyes of students in her lecture "Africa on Six Wheels: A Semester on Safari"

February 3: *No WLS (conflict with Super Bowl).*

February 10: Professor Wesley Peterson of Agricultural Economics at UNL, with some of his invited colleagues, will form a panel to discuss "Prospects for Economic Growth and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa."

February 17: Professor Joseph P. Akpan is a political scientist who teaches at several universities. He will discuss "Oil Resources and Human Rights in Africa."

February 24: Professor Janet Poley, President of the American Distance Education Consortium, will present "Revitalizing African Relationships in Education: A RARE Opportunity."

March 2: Assoc. Professor of Agronomy at Iowa State University, Andrew Manu, will present "Food Sustainability and Natural Resource Management: A Matter of Survival."

March 9: The final dinner will begin at 6 p.m., and will be followed by a panel of experts discussing other African issues.

Each session except for the March 9 dinner will begin at 7:00 p.m. and last for two hours. The first hour will feature a presentation by the guest lecturer, followed by a break. The remainder of the time will be an opportunity for questions and dialogue. The March 9 dinner begins at 6:00 p.m., followed at 7:00 p.m. by a panel presentation.

Additional parking is available in the south parking lot of the Catholic Social Services building (formerly Clark Jeary) across Eldon Street from the church.

This event is sponsored by the Social Action Committee of the Unitarian Church and the Nebraska Humanities Council.

November League events educate us on the Constitution, Impeachment, and Urban Development

On November 11, Dr. John Hibbing, Professor of Political Science at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, spoke on “The US Constitution and Impeachment” at an event was held at the Unitarian Church. Fifty people from the Lincoln community attended. Professor Hibbing described the process by which the Constitution was written and ratified, noting that the Bill of Rights came years later. He described the use of the impeachment clause, including when it has been used and the outcome of the activity of using impeachment. He spoke of the separation of powers between the judiciary, the legislative, and the executive branches of government as it relates to impeachment process. He noted that the purpose of impeachment is to remove corrupt politicians from office who have committed “high crimes and misdemeanors,” that it has been used only three times at the Federal level of government, and that each time the process has been used against a President it has failed. Questions ranged from historical to the present with several questioners asking about the issues surrounding the departure of Richard Nixon as President and the impeachment trial of Bill Clinton.

On November 15, David Landis, City of Lincoln Urban Development Director, addressed about 50 people on issues related to retention of strong urban areas. His job is not always easy. Urban development can affect traffic, flood plains, and other aspects of neighborhoods, but stagnation can lead to blight and urban decay. Recent discussions on such topics as development at 10th & Military and proposals for changing the location of the State Fair have brought him into contact with good people who have strong opinions on both sides of these issues. He encourages that; he wants to hear what the community has to say, because public input is important to the planning of a community.



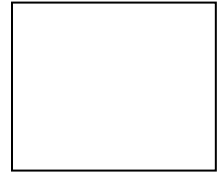
John Hibbing



David Landis

Photographs courtesy of Dick Dienstbier

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