



# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

*May 2009*

President: Patte Newman  
President-Elect: Mary Boschult  
Secretary: Carol Connor  
Treasurer: Margaret Remmenga  
Voter Editor: Jim Johnson

## Calendar of Events

**May 21 (Thursday): Noon**  
Lunch & Learn,  
US Bank Bldg 20<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
13<sup>th</sup> & M Streets, Lincoln  
Topic: *Human Rights: Positive and  
Negative*  
See article at right.

## **League of Women Voters Lunch & Learn to Focus on Human Rights**

At the May 21st League of Women Voters Lunch and Learn, Dr. David P. Forsythe will address the topic "Human Rights: Positive and Negative." Americans endorse the negative rights of freedom from governmental authority. International human rights law also endorses the positive rights of freedom to benefit from governmental policies like health care. Dr. Forsythe will discuss this form of American exceptionalism and explore whether the American view is changing.

Dr. Forsythe is university professor and Charles J. Mach Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In the fall of 2008, he held the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Human Rights and International Studies in

Copenhagen Denmark. He has served on committees of many professional associations, including a term as president of the Human Rights Committee of the International Political Science Association. Additionally, he has been recognized as a distinguished scholar by the mid-west section of the International Studies Association as well as by the Human Rights Section of the American Political Science Association. He has approximately 100 publications on different aspects of International Relations.

Lunch & Learn events are open to the public. The luncheon will be held Thursday, May 21st at 12:00 noon on the 20th floor of the US Bank Building, 13th and M Streets. The cost is \$9.00 and includes lunch, tax and gratuity. Reservations are required by noon Monday, May 18 and may be made by contacting the League Office by e-mail at [lwv-ne@inebraska.com](mailto:lwv-ne@inebraska.com) or by phone at 475-1411. Include your name, the number of reservations requested and contact information: your phone number or e-mail address.

The League of Women Voters Lunch & Learn events are held on the third Thursday of each month from September through May. All luncheons are open to the public with advance reservations. The series will resume in September.

## **Thanks to those who participated in the UNICEF Tap Project!**

Thanks in part to League participation, the UNICEF Tap Project sponsored by the United Nations Association's Nebraska Division raised about \$837 during World Water Week March 22-28, 2009, enough to assure clean water for 837 children for 40 days.

## **Debate Survey Results, Spring 2009**

### ***Overview***

We received 40 responses to our survey; 15 were submitted via the print form and 25 via the online form. Approximately two-thirds (27) of those who responded had viewed at least one of the debates. Because there are 29 separate responses as to how the debates were viewed, it is probable there was an assumption by at least two respondents that in answering the survey, we would know they had seen the debates without them marking “yes” to the first question. If this is correct, almost three-fourths of the respondents (72.5%) had seen at least one of the debates.

Among the 24 individuals who replied they had seen the debates in the first question (but was probably at least 29 as indicated above), some watched them more than once as the second question shows a total of 32 separate viewings (neither of the two who marked “Other” saw the debates). Most of these viewings (about 45% in both cases) were either in person or via 5City TV per cable. About 21% watched the debates via computer access to the city website.

Seventy percent (21 out of 30) of those who answered whether or not the debates affected their planned vote replied that it did. This result alone should encourage us to continue in providing debates—and to make a greater group effort to make voters aware of the debates’ availability.

### ***Responses to Three Comments***

As Debate Coordinator, there are three comments I feel obligated to respond to. My first response is to the person who requested help in finding the debates on the city website. The surveys were anonymous and therefore, it was impossible to assist.

The second is to the suggestion that League make the 5CITY TV schedule more widely available. The tight turnaround time of city elections does not correspond well with the Voter delivery schedule, further complicated by the fact 5CITY TV changes their scheduling on a weekly basis. I do provide all co-sponsor contacts with a week’s schedule a couple days after each set of debates (it takes that long to determine the schedule). These contacts include the LWVLL President, so it is her discretion whether or not to forward it to the membership. I know there is concern about sending out too many email blasts about League activity as people do not appreciate their Inboxes being bombarded. If members would like emails announcing these schedules when we have debates, it is best to contact LWVLL Board members to make that request. When the timing between the Voter issues and debate scheduling works favorably, we do include that information as well as the website URL in the Voter.

My third response is to the person who commented that it is a disservice to the community to not group whichever school board candidates who are available to debate into one forum. One problem with this is that it overlooks the fact that the debates are election-based and designed to assist voters in the voting booth. All available candidates in one forum would place two burdens on the district voters: (1) they would be required to watch a longer discussion because it would necessarily include more individuals; and, (2) they would be required to sort out which two (or in some cases, one) candidates they will actually be able to vote on. The overriding debates’ goal is to HELP the voters, not cloud their vision.

Another problem with grouping all available school board candidates into one forum is that LWVUS’s debate guidelines *strongly recommend* cancellation of a debate if only one candidate is available to avoid any appearance of League supporting that candidate. If the ballot divides candidates by district and there are only two candidates within one district, and one of them cannot (or chooses not to) debate, we risk a misinterpretation of candidate endorsement even if the one available candidate is included in a larger group for discussion. Debates are based on how the election(s) is/are designed. This is also a concern for our co-sponsors who maintain a tax-deductible 501(c)(3) standing; they do not wish to place themselves in a position of potential liability for what essentially would be a lack of nonpartisanship.

The city council candidates were all opposing each other for the same three council seats, so in reflecting what will be on the ballots, it was necessary to include them all in one debate. In 2011, the council’s four district seats will be up for election and we will then separate the candidates by district. We do not hold an event for an unopposed candidate or for primary election candidates who will all move on to the general election as cost-saving measures.

I hope this is helpful.

*Sharon Nemeth*

## Debate Survey Results, Spring 2009

*Total number of responses (n) = 40*

1. Did you or anyone in your family watch the candidates' forums?	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes.....	27	67.5%
Not that I know of.....	13	32.5%
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Avg</u>
If yes, how many in your household watched? (18 responses) .....	24	1.33

**Notes:** (a) One respondent did not answer #1 and another respondent answered both "Yes" and "Not that I know of"; (b) 12 of the printed survey respondents did not indicate how many watched—an entry was required in the online version.

2. Did you/they watch (check all that apply) (29 responses):	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
In person .....	13	44.8%
5City TV per cable.....	13	44.8%
Computer access to city website.....	6	20.7%
Other (please specify) .....	2	6.9%
(a) Read news & listen to radio		
(b) Not applicable		

3. Did anything that you saw or heard during the forum influence how you plan to vote? (30 responses)	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes .....	21	70.0%
No .....	8	26.7%
Not sure.....	1	3.3%

4. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve future forums?

### Online responses:

Would have watched, but have been out of town for several weeks. [Marked #1. "not that I know of", did not mark #s 2 & 3]

I couldn't attend and we don't have cable. Can you help me find it on InterLine? [Marked #1. "not that I know of", did not mark #s 2 & 3]

The league does a valuable service to the community in holding these forums. [Marked #1. "yes" and "1 watched", #2. "5City TV per cable", #3. "yes"]

Would love if League would send out a schedule of times that Debates are being aired. Do know that many people watch and I would definitely forward the info. [Marked #1. "not that I know of", did not mark #s 2 & 3]

I think the format and all is fine ... actually, seeing the candidates and hearing them gives you a feel for the person... more so on TV since the camera gets close in and you might not get to meet them in person other places. [Marked #1. "yes" and "3 watched", #2. "5City TV per cable", #3. "yes"]

I like the "rapid-fire" yes/no questions at the end, and I like the idea of candidates asking each other questions, but I'd like to see each candidate asked a question by another candidate. I'm not sure how that would be arranged, though. [Marked #1. "yes" and "1 watched", #2. "in person", #3. "yes"]

The debates are of value. I would guess that many people watch the debates on Channel 5. So turnout has to be judged on how many actually see the debates even though they don't attend in person. [Marked #1. "yes" and "2 watched", #2. "5City TV per cable", #3. "no"]

For school board candidates -- it is a disservice to our community not to hear from all available candidates. Perhaps a different type of forum - similar to the city council where all 6 candidates were invited would be advisable. Just because elections are by subdistricts doesn't mean they should be limited to only the two individuals. For the general election the broader format might allow some real issues to be debated and discussed. More importantly - we should remember that just because you are elected by a sub section of the community, you still make decisions that affect the entire community. Candidates for board positions need to understand that reality. Thank you. [Marked #1. "yes" and "2 watched", #2. "in person", #3. "no"]

I voted before I saw it. I'm always an early voter. [Marked #1. "not that I know of and also "yes" and "part of it", #2. "5City TV per cable", #3. "no"]

Thought it was pretty good. [Marked #1. "yes" and "2 watched", #2. "computer access to city website", #3. "yes"]

### Print Survey responses:

Tell the sound guy to leave the mics live & not try to "guess" when folks will speak. [Did not mark anything else.]

Should have these forums more, to let the public know we are putting in office. [Marked #1. "yes", #2. "in person", #3. "yes"]

Smaller venue? [Marked #1. "yes" and "2 watched", #2. "in person" and "5CityTV per cable", and #3 "yes"]

Keep 'em coming! Also, keep the moderator's microphone open so that her first few words can be heard (when posing a new question). [Marked #1. "not that I know of", #2. "in person", and #3 "yes"]

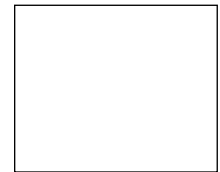
I now feel that I know a lot more about the candidates; A little more knowledge of where & when beforehand. [Marked #1. "yes", #2. "in person" and "other: read news & listen to radio"]

Force convicts to fill the seats? [Marked #1. "yes", #2. "in person", #3. "yes"]

Probably that one negative question was a problem (this survey was from March). [Marked #1. "yes" and 1 person watched, #2 "5CityTV per cable", and #3. "yes"]

I think they are very helpful to see and hear the candidates as well as what one reads in the paper & propaganda—even if they change their minds. [Marked #1 "yes", #2. "5CityTV per cable", and #3. "yes"]

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Time Dated Material  
Please Do Not Delay



**Dr. Ken Dewey addresses Lunch & Learn on the subject of Global Warming**

At the April League of Women Voters Lunch and Learn, Dr. Ken Dewey from UN-L addressed the topic “*Global Warming: Fact or Fiction.*” Dr. Dewey stated that it’s not that he “believes” in global warming, any more than he “believes” in gravity. Rather, he *knows* that global warming is happening, and has seen evidence to prove it, including firsthand on a recent trip through Alaska and Canada. He is currently putting together a presentation with more detailed information about what he saw in the Arctic, and hopes to have that compiled later this year; he invites interested people to check back with him and see what he learned on his trip north. He also invites people to check out the UN-L Nebraska Weather and Climate website ([www.nebraskaweather.org](http://www.nebraskaweather.org)).