



# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

June/July 2009

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## Farewell to Helen Boosalis

In this issue, we pay tribute to our friend and mentor, Helen Boosalis. Helen was a lifetime member of the League of Women Voters, and a onetime League president.

See comments at right from a former Lincoln Mayor, and see below for an opportunity to help carry on Helen's tradition of caring for the community.

## Message from LWVLL President Patte Newman

As you all know, we lost one of our lifetime members this week. While there is no "policy" for the League to let the membership know of an ex-member's passing and it has been mentioned that this might set a unsustainable precedent, most of the LWVLL Board feel in this case we do need to let people know.....and to go one step further.

Helen Boosalis was an extraordinary role model we can all be proud to have known. She was an active member of the League of Women Voters, proved to be an inspirational trailblazer for Nebraskan women and one of Lincoln's most visionary and dedicated city leaders.

The League Board and Lunch & Learn committee have made personal donations and will send a memorial to the family this week on behalf of the local League leadership. We would like to do something bigger on behalf of the entire League membership in honor of a woman who believed in community service and the ideals of this organization. The board would like to raise funds to plant a city tree (perhaps a strong, elegant oak) or possibly trees, in honor of Helen near the trail named after her, on behalf of the local League of Women Voters as a permanent and very fitting tribute to her.

We would also like to try to help finance this year's LWVLL yearbook and the Directory of Elected Officials to include a special tribute to Helen.

Please consider making a small donation to the League in honor of Helen so we can pursue both ideas. If you feel strongly about one or the other please mark your donation accordingly. We will be collecting through the end of July. Parks and Rec has informed us they will allow us to have a tree planting ceremony in the fall when the weather is appropriate to plant again.

Any checks should be made payable to the League of Women Voters, Lincoln-Lancaster and clearly marked as Helen Boosalis memorial (and specify either "tree" or "publication tribute" if it makes a difference to you). Checks should be mailed to the League Office at 140 N. 8th Street, Ste 215, Lincoln 68508.

Thank you for considering a contribution to a League memorial for Helen. Feel pass this on to other friends of Helen.

- Patte Newman, LWVLL President

## Remembering Helen Boosalis by Don Wesely

June 15, 2009

Some people you come across just stand out. You know it when you first meet them. You know it when ever you see them. You know you will remember them the rest of your days. Helen Boosalis was like that. She stood out.

The impetus for Helen's civic service was her work with the League of Women Voters helping change Lincoln to a "strong mayor" form of government. Helen was a President of the League and a lifetime member.

The list of Helen's accomplishments is long and illustrious. Elected Lincoln's first woman Mayor in 1975. Elected to the City Council in 1959. Reelected Mayor in 1979. In 1981 Helen was elected the first woman President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. In 1986 Helen was the Nebraska Democratic Party nominee in the first gubernatorial race between two women in any state in the country. In 1996 Helen was elected Chair of the National AARP Board of Directors. In 1996 Helen was also elected Board Chair of the Arbor Day Foundation. Helen's list goes on and on.

What really made Helen Boosalis stand out wasn't just her long list of accomplishments, it was also her boundless energy. Helen was a force of nature. She was driven, determined and dedicated to making this world a better place. Lincoln, Nebraska was fortunate to be the place where she devoted her energy and talents to making a difference in this world. She made a difference in public policy in Lincoln, Nebraska and our country. She also made a personal difference in many people's lives along the way. Helping us, encouraging us, inspiring us. All of us who knew Helen Boosalis were blessed to have known her. All of us who live in Lincoln are the beneficiaries of her service as our Mayor. To me she stood out because she stood up for people who needed help. She stood up for people that were being ignored. She stood up to people in power who didn't want to share their power. Helen Boosalis was a courageous crusader for change and we are better for her public service over a remarkable lifetime. I for one will remember her the rest of my days.

**Don Wesely**  
**Mayor of Lincoln, 1999-2003**  
**Nebraska State Senator, 1979-1999**

## David Forsythe featured in Final LWV Lunch & Learn of 2008-2009

The final Lunch & Learn of the 08/09 series was held May 21<sup>st</sup> with a world class speaker on international human rights. David P. Forsythe, a Charles J. Mach Distinguished Professor of Political Science at UNL holds postdoctoral fellowships at Princeton and Yale, and visiting professorships at universities in Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Professor Forsythe started his presentation with an explanation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UDHR was adopted on December 10, 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations as a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations to promote freedom, justice and peace in the world. The Assembly asked all Member nations to publicize the Declaration within their own borders. Forsythe specifically referred to Articles 22 through 26. He said Americans do not seem to have a problem with free education (article 26), but many prefer libertarian ideology when they consider other positive rights including a right to health care.



Several slides were shown regarding health disparities. In the U.S. we pay more and get less per capita from healthcare. Approximately \$7,000 is spent per person per year for health care costs compared with \$4,000 in other countries. There are fifty million Americans with no insurance and more have inadequate healthcare. America's longevity rates are not in the top ten; life expectancy averages 78 with France beating the U.S. by 3 years. Healthcare spending as a percentage of the gross domestic product is nearly 17% in the U.S.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt felt that freedom from want is one of the fundamental freedoms. Harry Truman proposed a universal health scheme but dropped the idea because of too much resistance. President Carter signed onto the treaty, Clinton endorsed it but it was never submitted to the Senate for advice and consent because of opposition to some of the positive rights specified. Articles 22 through 25 state rights

to social security, right to work with free choice of employment, to join trade unions, just remuneration and conditions, equal pay for equal work, paid holidays and a right to an adequate standard of living including medical care.

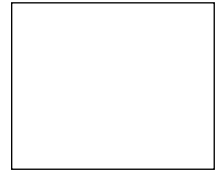
Forsythe explained that several countries have addressed the health issue differently. Canada has a commitment to preventative health and keeps costs low by regulating the industry. There can be waits for specialized treatment. The Swiss have a two tier system with private doctors obligated to see a percentage of patients for the government but have their own private practices. In the U.S. health care costs have been pushed onto employers and the result is that corporations and small businesses cannot compete with Japan and other countries.

A universal health care model has been in effect for two years in the state of Massachusetts, where everyone is required to purchase health insurance. While more data is necessary, it seems to be working as no one falls through the cracks. There are still private insurance companies, but with government subsidies.



Professor Forsythe encouraged the group to check the World Health Organization ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)) or the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development ([www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)) for more information. He does see signs that health care reform may be coming but how significant those changes will be, remain to be seen.

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