



Boulder County Voter
League of Women Voters of Boulder County

lwvbc.org

February 2015 Members 160

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- TAVOR Meetings
- President's Letter
- Change in Units
- Campaign Financing
- New League Position
- Program Report
- May State League Convention Here, Volunteers Needed!
- ...and more...

Community Meeting on TABOR Refunds

Mon. Feb. 9th, 11 am - 12:30 pm

Frasier Meadows Retirement Community,
350 Ponca Place, Boulder, 80303

OR

Wed. Feb 11, 6 - 7:30 pm

Community Room at the Louisville Alfalfa's,
785 E. South Boulder Rd,
Louisville, 80027

Our notoriously underfunded state is required to refund money to taxpayers this year because of TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights). Why, exactly? Plan to attend this community meeting sponsored by the League of Women Voters (NOT for Women Only!) to hear an expert from the non-profit Colorado Fiscal Institute explain the details of what is being discussed at the Capital.

David Skaggs, former U.S. Congressman currently in private law practice, will supplement this information with an update on a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of TABOR. The lawsuit is currently awaiting a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on whether to review a 10th Circuit's ruling.

Please join us for this important topic!!

What is TABOR?

In 1992 Colorado voters adopted an amendment to the State Constitution. Labeled by its author the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR), the amendment dramatically changed the financial management practices of Colorado's state and local governments putting strict limitations on the amount of tax revenues and fees for services that can be collected and spent. TABOR is long, complex, detailed and inflexible. As a result the General Assembly has created convoluted "work-arounds" to meet the needs of the state.

President's Ponderings ...

Our State Convention is in Boulder this May! We'll be hosting Leaguers from all over the state, and we need your help to make them feel welcome and well-cared for (see article in this Voter on volunteer opportunities).

If you attended Program Planning this month then you know that Lynne Wegley led a great meeting and we have a number of good local and state recommendations (this Voter covers state recommendations; April Voter will cover local recommendations).

You can keep up with state League action while our state legislature is in session (Jan-May) by reading the Legislative Update. It's available free on LWVCO's website, and you can support the League's effort by paying for a personal subscription sent to your email. There's so much information at our finger tips these days, the trick is finding good sources that meet our needs and interests. A couple sources I've used recently:

My City

I signed up for a free weekly email that provides a link to a short video (City of Boulder news releases) and I watch it at my convenience. Boulder has a list of info emails covering various city topics. Subscriptions are free and easy to delete or change. Here's the link: <https://bouldercolorado.gov/newsroom/city-of-boulder-email-lists>. Does your city have such a list of info emails?

Also, Boulder has a new website which attempts to be more of a one-stop shop for people that want to keep up with city government planning:

<https://bouldercolorado.gov/planning/boulder-planning>

K-12 Education in Colorado

Ever want a basic picture of what happened to K-12 financing over the last few decades? The Colorado Fiscal Institute has a handy one-page infographic:

<http://www.coloradofiscal.org/info-graphic-a-history-of-school-finance-in-colorado/>

I encourage you to look for government action info sources for yourself and your League... let us know when you find good ones!

~ Ceal

Boulder County Voter

10 Issues per Year

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P.O. Box 21274, Boulder CO 80308

www.lwvbc.org

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Calendar

FEBRUARY

9 TABOR Community Meeting, Boulder
11 TABOR Community Meeting, Louisville
25 Board Meeting, / *Voter* Deadline

MARCH

9-11 Unit Meetings
14 Meet Your Legislators
25 Board Meeting, / *Voter* Deadline

Units—Changes in the News

The Wednesday noon unit will have a new location AND a new time for the March and April units. This unit meeting will now be held at the main Boulder Public Library, in the Arapahoe conference room, instead of at the Meadows Library. In addition, the new time will be 11:30 am – 1:00 pm (instead of noon-1:30). These changes are on the LWVBC website, and I recommend that all members make these updates to the unit meeting information on the inside cover of your Membership Handbook.

The Longmont unit is losing its Unit Leader, Louise Crede, as she and Herb are moving to Loveland soon. Prue Larson has volunteered to be the new Unit Leader in Longmont. At the Reynolds Library unit, Judy Steuben found it necessary to step down as Co-Leader for now. Deborah Hayes has graciously agreed to be the new Co-Leader for that unit.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Louise Crede and Judy Steuben for their years of service in unit leadership. We all appreciate everything you have done! And I am grateful to Prue Larson and Deborah Hayes for agreeing to step in. Thank you!

I assume you are all aware by now that in February we will not have the usual 5 units, but instead will have 2 larger presentations on TABOR. Thanks to all of the unit leaders for making this change for their respective units, and we look forward to seeing everyone at the usual unit meetings in March and April.

Peggy Leech, Unit Coordinator

Campaign Finance Reform Committee

The Campaign Finance Reform Committee has put together a presentation on “Money in American Elections”. This tool will allow our League and other Leagues to educate various groups of people about the vast amount of money that is being spent on political campaigns. When legislators have been elected through the expenditure of special interest money they are obligated to work for the special interests and not the people who actually elected them. For example, *OpenSecrets* reports that the oil and gas industry spent \$141 million on lobbying in 2012, while the alternative energy industry spent one sixth that amount: \$24 million. The amount of money the energy industry spent to defeat the 2010 American Clean Energy and Security Act is \$543 million. *American Progress* reports that federal subsidies to the oil and natural gas industries are \$7 billion each year.

The “Money in American Elections” presentation will be given at the March unit meetings and it can be viewed on our website at www.lwvbc.org under ‘Campaign Finance Reform’. Leagues can also share information about their presentations via the website.

We are seeking people who would like to make this presentation to various groups. A meeting for presenters will be held at the George Reynolds Library on April 7, 2015 at 6:30PM. If you are willing/interested in helping with this effort please plan to attend.

Our committee plans to develop an email list of subscribers around the state, who will receive periodic emails from us with new/updated information about money in elections and its effects. Stay tuned!"

NEW POSITION

In December 2014, following consensus Units in November, the LWVBC board approved our League's new position on Minimum/Living Wages under Social Policy.

The position is based upon our LWVUS position on Meeting Basic Human Needs: “The LWVUS believes that one of the goals of social policy in the U.S. should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty. ... Persons ... whose earnings are inadequate ... have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs.”

The working poor face multiple issues, including low wages, employers’ reliance on part-time workers, cutbacks in federal assistance, the “cliff effect” that lowers benefits disproportionately when wages rise, and the Colorado law that prohibits local jurisdictions from setting an adequate minimum wage for the locality. We continue to support government assistance to the working poor until wage policies that promote self-sufficiency are fully implemented.

MINIMUM / LIVING WAGES

The LWVBC believes that just as Colorado can set a minimum wage above the federal minimum wage, so local jurisdictions should be able to exceed the state minimums. We oppose legislation that prohibits such local action.

We believe that alleviating poverty is the shared responsibility of government, employers, individuals, and non-profit assistance organizations. All sectors should be involved in setting an adequate minimum wage or living wage.

The living wage is the minimum required to avoid poverty without government assistance and subsidies. The living wage (gross income) should cover the costs of food, clothing, housing, energy, transportation, health care, K–12 education, child care, taxes (income, Social Security), and supplemental expenses for work and school.

In determining a living wage, a jurisdiction should consider the local cost of living, the national Consumer Price Index, and other reliable and measurable data.

When a jurisdiction makes changes to wage laws, it should ensure that data regarding the effects of those changes are collected and distributed.

New Education Website

Attention Education Inquisitives: Are you interested in learning about school issues around the country? Visit the National League's new blog on education blog-lwveducation.com. You will find informative data, studies, and perspectives. You may send stories of events in our state. You may use the information you find to advocate for League positions and be a more informed Leaguer. You can subscribe to the blog to receive notices of new posts.

LWVBC PROGRAM

LWVBC Program Planning was held Saturday, January 10, 2015. Members reviewed state and local positions and recommended whether to retain, drop or review current positions; adopt a new study; and adopt other League positions by consensus.

The LWVBC Board reviewed recommended actions to the state positions at the January 28 board meeting. The Board forwarded the following recommendations to the State Board for consideration:

- Precinct Caucus/Assembly System: Recommend a review, especially of how candidates are put on the ballot, and either change the position to be more compatible with our proposed voting methods study, or drop this position. Alternatively, LWVCO may want to consider rolling the review into the scope of the voting methods study (if approved).
- School Finance (Pre-K through 12th Grade): Recommend retention, but needs review and clarification of wording "relieve property tax."
- Recommend LWVCO concurrence with LWVBC position on Wage Issues.
- Support Larimer County's proposed study to expand the Hydraulic Fracturing position.
- Support the LWVCO Behavioral Health Task Force proposal that the LWVCO Health Care Position be updated to include Behavioral Health.
- Recommend a new LWVCO study on Voting Methods. The proposal for this study was developed by LWVBC.

The LWVCO Board will review all recommendations forwarded by local state Leagues and determine what recommendations to take to the State Convention in Boulder May 16-17.

Recommendations regarding local program will be printed in the April Voter and voted on at our annual meeting May 2.

LWVBC Holiday Luncheon was held December 6, 2014, at the Boulder Country Club. Susie Strife, Coordinator for the Boulder County Environmental Sustainability Office, spoke about the department's mission and program. Boulder City Councilman Tim Plass was in attendance, and he shared his interest in the County's activities surrounding the growing, and consumption of local food.

The County Commissioners approved the Environmental Sustainability Master Plan in 2012. Energy Smart is one of their largest programs. The Longs Peak Energy Conservation Program installs insulation and other energy efficiency improvements in houses of the County's lowest income residents. These improvements reduce the residents on-going utility expenses and reduce greenhouse gases from electricity produced in coal-fired power plants. The staff is also active in promoting zero waste to meet a County goal for zero or "darn near" waste by 2020. They have also installed solar panels on County buildings.

The Sustainability office relies on grants for much of their funding. The program needs a more reliable long-term source of funding. Susie said that surveys indicate that sustainability is a cultural value shared by most County residents. And that there is support for passage of a sales tax increment or increase in property tax mill levy to be placed on the ballot in a future election to support the sustainability programs.

Lynne Wegley, 1st VP Program

Colorado's State League Convention Coming to Boulder

The Biennial Colorado League of Women Voters Convention will be hosted by the Boulder County League at the Millenium Harvest House in Boulder on May 16 and 17, 2015. A state League Convention has not been held in Boulder County for a very long time, so we are overdue. A committee (Mary Anna Dunn, Prue Larson, Lois Linsky, Shirley Jin, Ceal Ruffing, and Louisa Young, chair) has been hard at work for several months already, and soon it will be time to involve the rest of the membership. It will require the active participation of everyone, and there is something every member can do. At the same time, our League is entitled to several delegates, and some, but not all, of the jobs will not be compatible with the duties of a delegate. Below are job descriptions of the positions we need to fill. It is obvious we need a lot of volunteers to make the event go smoothly, so our first request is for you to block out May 15-17 on your calendar. Then look over the jobs that need to be filled and decide which ones you will do. Feel free to sign up for more than one.

Respond by emailing Louisa Young (convention@lwvbc.org) or calling her (303-444-6428). We will start circulating sign-up sheets in March, so if there is something you prefer to do, better contact Louisa right away.

LWVCO Convention May 16-17 2015 Hosted by LWV Boulder County Volunteer Job Descriptions

Silent Auction. This is a fund-raising project for the state League. Local Leagues share in profits from items they solicited or donated. The Auction is held in a room separate from the Convention business. Various shifts are scheduled for volunteer duties. Volunteers will need to help unload items from various vehicles on Friday evening May 15th and help set up displays. This could involve heavy lifting and non-Leaguers are welcome to help (husbands, adult sons). Some valuable items are donated, so volunteers are needed to monitor the room when it is open on Saturday May 16th and Sunday May 17th, to be sure nothing walks away. At the end of the convention, volunteers will be needed to pack up items for the successful bidders and to clean up. Be aware that some of these tasks may take place while other convention events are occurring.

Registration. As delegates and visitors arrive, volunteers will check names off the registration list provided by the state League, give out badges, materials and goody bags. (We have solicited gift items from local businesses for distribution to convention delegates in what we call "goody bags".) Before the Convention, we will need volunteers to take the bags and stuff them with the gifts. Various shifts (Saturday morning and again Sunday morning) will be scheduled for volunteers at the registration desk.

Tours. The planning committee has arranged 4 tours to be available by preregistration for delegates and visitors. The tours are: Avery Brewery, Celestial Seasonings, CHaRM (Center for Hard to Recycle Materials), and a walking tour of the historic Mapleton area. Bus transportation has been arranged for each tour. They will take place between 3 and 5 on the afternoon of Saturday, May 16th. We need 1 volunteer to be the Captain overseeing all the tours and 1 volunteer escort for each of the tours. The Captain will work with the escorts to handle the tours efficiently, and make sure each escort has a list of all registrants that are going on that escort's tour. The Captain will have a master list of all registrants, and send people to the correct tour escort. The escorts will have signs

to make it clear which tour they are escorting, will verify all registrants for that tour before the tour departs, accompany the registrants and be sure everyone gets there and back. In addition, we need 1 volunteer who can make the signs ahead of time.

Greeters. We need several volunteers to be visible and available throughout the Convention who can be approached by delegates or visitors to answer questions. We plan to have a training session with hotel personnel so that Greeters will have answers to common questions. Probably the most common questions will be: where are the restrooms, the luncheon and the Auction room. There could be questions like: where to go for a short walk or where to find a drug or grocery store. It could be anything.

~Louisa Young



Happy Birthday LWVBC Facebook Page!

On February 1st our Facebook page will have been “revitalized” one year. If you haven’t already done so, please take the time to join Facebook and become a fan of our page.

For those of you who would like to become more savvy about social media networking, two opportunities are listed below.

Opportunities to become familiar with Facebook:

Wed Feb 4th, 1 – 3:30 pm, **Facebook Demonstration**, #182034.14

Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Ave, Longmont \$2. Residents, \$3 Non-residents

Fri Feb 20th, 9 am – 12 noon, **Facebook Assistance**, #182502.02

Front Range Community College, 2121 Miller Drive, Classroom C1504, Longmont

\$10 Residents and \$12 Non-residents

Questions? Contact Ruth Stemler, Public Relations Director, at PR@lwvbc.org

Membership Notes

The majority of our members renewed using the dues form sent out in August 2014, without additional reminders. We so appreciate those who've chosen to continue their memberships and particularly those who went beyond the basic dues and supported our organization with a sustaining membership or other gift. Except for those who wish to remain anonymous, all who donated in 2014 will be acknowledged, some in the March *Voter* and the rest in the April issue. The new twist is that *Voters*, starting with this one, will be accessible online to the general public. If, knowing this, any donors would prefer their names be omitted from the listings, it is not too late to request anonymity. Leave a message at 303-666-5248 or membership@lwvbc.org to make your intention known to us.

Our membership has dropped by 18 since November, to 160. Various circumstances explain these departures, and I'd like to highlight two individuals who will be sorely missed. **Cynthia Jessel** died 10 December, 2014. Cynthia was extremely active beginning in the 1970s and 1980s in the old Boulder (city) League. She was extremely knowledgeable, especially on environmental matters. Deborah Hayes recalls that Cynthia was in that circle around Tess McNulty, Bev Warburton, Toni Wooster (now Larson), and friends whose environmental concerns were often at the state level. Cynthia represented LWVCO on the state land use board (a big frustration for her), and was also active with Plan Boulder, and the Rocky Mountain Center on the Environment. She refused to be a board member, let alone LWV/Boulder president, although she was eminently qualified and she was often asked. Cynthia was able to achieve results without being in the limelight, and is recognized for her part in convincing others of the value of leaving open the areas which now make up the city of Boulder's green belt. Along with activism for the environment, Cynthia in her life displayed great respect for the arts and devotion to family, particularly her husband Walter, whom she met and married in Germany while working for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. We extend our condolences to Cynthia's children and grandchildren.

Paula McKey and her husband have moved to Scottsdale, AZ. Paula is known to many in the community due to her key roles with Boulder County Human Services, her membership in the League, and after her retirement, her position on the County's Board of Health. Paula has a rare ability to take complicated matters and make the basic concepts understandable to almost anyone. I recall a time she explained to a group of us studying social policy issues how her department constructed a budget which relies on revenues from federal, state and local sources, taking into account that the levels of government end their fiscal years each in a different calendar month! Paula will be transferring her League membership to the League of Women Voters of Metro Phoenix. If any of you would like to drop Paula a note, contact me for her new postal address. She will continue to use the same email address.

----Submitted by Liz Black for the membership team.

Strategic Planning

Ceal Ruffing

Over the last few weeks, we have taken the first steps toward formal strategic planning. A professional consultant was hired, beginning work in mid-December and continuing with us for another 7 months, including a full day retreat in February and a final full day retreat in July. We plan for significant participation from LWVBC leaders, including committee chairs, team members, unit leaders, and others. All members are being asked to complete short surveys during this project, and we welcome further input to the LWVBC Board from any member.

Four of our eleven Board members have first hand experience with formal strategic planning: one as the head of a non-profit organization, two in University settings, and another in a Boulder County municipality. The Board is unanimous in its support of strategic planning for LWVBC.

We are grateful to Larimer county League member and LWV Shur Fellow Linda Mahan for her guidance as we explored and made our decisions regarding strategic planning. Both Linda and the Boulder Community Foundation recommended strategic planning consultants for our consideration. We have the encouragement of our state League in this process. We are in the vanguard here— not many local Leagues have taken on formal strategic planning, and our experience will serve as a pilot project for review by our state League.

The cost for an experienced strategic planning consultant over the 7-8 month period is being paid from the General Fund. After strategic planning expense, we project the balance in our General Fund to be nearly double what we need to cover General Fund expenses for the remaining fiscal year. Our Educational Fund is not affected by strategic planning expense. While a consultant is a significant expense, we concluded that these funds, held in LWVBC accounts for almost a decade, could and should be used to invest in LWVBC by taking a fresh look at the organization, determining priorities, defining short and long term goals, and setting metrics that we can review to assess our progress on those goals. A highly qualified consultant, as well as our follow-through during and after the strategic planning process, are key to making the plan successful.

As you may imagine, strategic planning is a big commitment of time and energy on the part of LWVBC Board members. We are excited about the project and look forward to engaging with our members in the process.

Looking for New Member Contact Info?

If you are unable to find a member's contact info in the newest published directory, contact Liz Black, Membership Chair, membership@lwvbc.org. Liz will provide you with the info requested, or will send the latest electronic copy of the membership directory.



A Day at the Capitol

I recently attended the LWV Colorado 2015 Legislative Conference at the state capitol in Denver. This is about the 5th or 6th one I have attended, and I always enjoy them. In fact, I use up a day of vacation every time I attend one of these!

My favorite part of this year's session was a wonderful (interesting, humorous, logical) talk by Carol Hedges from the Colorado Fiscal Institute, with an update on TABOR. She strongly advocated for various groups (including the League) to band together this year to make something happen on the 2016 ballot, similar to the Referendum C ballot issue that passed in 2005.

And I always LOVE listening to Chris Watson, our League lobbyist, who gives a talk right after lunch about what she sees coming up in this year's legislative session. She always manages to get some humor into her presentations.

There were 2 other presentations at the morning session, and both were very interesting. One was about the new "Colorado Water Plan", and the other was a reporter from the Denver Business Journal talking about oil and gas issues.

I sat next to a member from the Montrose/Delta County League at lunch, who is involved in agriculture (I think she said she lives on a farm). She noted that much of the water use in Colorado is agricultural (as pointed out in the Colorado Water Plan), and that water use in the agricultural sector can become much more efficient. This was a new viewpoint for me, as I always think we need to keep all this water for agricultural use and not for the growing population. She seemed to be suggesting somewhat of a compromise, or at least she gave me some food for thought.

I highly recommend this event to our members for next year. We usually have several members there from Boulder County, and we travel to the capitol by bus or carpool (which is also very enjoyable).

~Peggy Leech

Two New Committee Opportunities

Boulder City Council-Manager System: Proposals were adopted at the 2011 and 2013 annual meetings to review and update this position to include other cities in Boulder County. Questions that need to be addressed are: city council structure, elections at large or by district, and voting and election methodologies. At program planning it was recommended that if a committee is not found this year, the position should be dropped.

The Process of Amending the U.S. Constitution: The LWVUS Constitutional Amendment Committee is currently studying the process of amending the U.S. Constitution. This is the first step in a study of money in politics. A reading guide and discussion questions have just been released. The local committee is responsible for becoming familiar with the study materials, presenting the information, and taking consensus at the April Units. This is a short term, quick turn-around assignment.

If you are interested in working on either of these committees, please contact Ceal Ruffing or Lynne Wegley.

Wage Law Advocacy

Ceal Ruffing

Remember last Fall when we co-sponsored the forum, Living Wage: A Community Dialogue, with the Boulder Human Rights Commission, the Boulder Chamber of Commerce, and the Latino Chamber of Commerce of Boulder County? Since then, thanks to a lot of good work by our Social Policy Committee, we've held consensus and produced a new LWVBC position related to wage law.

The new LWVBC position calls for local authority for wage law, a coalition effort in addressing local wage law, and results/effects data distribution on any wage law that might be instituted. The LWVBC position tasks government with addressing/assessing an adequate minimum wage or living wage in their efforts to alleviate poverty. The LWVBC position provides a definition of living wage and recommendations for factors used to determine a living wage. The position is flexible enough to allow for exploration in producing the best in wage or compensation law policies that benefit the working poor while maintaining a healthy local economy.

Recent advocacy:

* LWVBC sent a letter to the editor, published in the Daily Camera 1/19/2015.

* LWVBC sent a letter to each Boulder City Council member, 1/19/2015, encouraging them to take action on local authority for determining an adequate wage for the working poor in two ways:

- * Support a change in state law that would allow local authorities to exceed the state minimum wage for all employers in their local area.

- * Continue to address adequate wages as a tool in alleviating poverty within the jurisdiction currently allowed to cities as a municipal employer.

* LWVBC is tracking pending state legislation that would allow local governments to exceed the state minimum wage. We have brought this legislation to the attention of state League's Legislative Action Committee.

* LWVBC recommended concurrence with the new wage position to state League. LWVBC has asked other Leagues to make the concurrence recommendation to state League.

League of Women Voters of Boulder County
P.O. Box 21274
Boulder CO 80308

To join the League of Women Voters of Boulder County, complete the form below and mail with your check (made payable to LWVBC) to LWVBC, P.O. Box 21274, Boulder CO 80308.

Dues are for one year and include membership in the state (LWVCO) and national Leagues (LWVUS), as well as our local League. Members will receive the *Boulder County Voter* and the *Colorado Voter*. Members may also sign up for various electronic newsletters. Please note that all membership in now managed by local Leagues. Any payment sent to the national League will be gratefully accepted as a gift but will not confer membership.

Because dues do not cover our costs, please consider adding a contribution. Contributions to the LWVBC are not tax deductible as charitable contributions, but a separate check payable to the LWVCO Education Fund is tax-deductible and will be placed in an account for qualifying activities of the local League. For business contributions, contact Louisa Young 303 444 6428 or send an e-mail: louisa.young@colorado.edu

New Member Renewal Today's Date _____

\$55 Single Membership \$82.50 Two members (same address) \$25 Student

(NEW) Sustaining Membership \$120 individual \$200 household

Name (please print) _____

Dues \$ _____

Address _____

Contribution \$ _ _

City _____ Zip _____

Total \$ _____

Phone (home) _____

E-mail (please print) _____