

LWV Ohio Statehouse Day – April 26, 2016

LWVO Lobbyist Report - Judiciary

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The League partnered with the Ohio Supreme Court, the Ohio State Bar Association, the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron, the Ohio Newspaper Association, and the Ohio Association of Broadcasters to develop a statewide judicial voter guide that provides information about all judicial candidates in the State.

JudicialVotesCount.org is housed at the Bliss Institute at the University of Akron. In addition to candidate profiles, the website features information about what judges do, descriptions about the duties of different courts, and videos of former judges explaining how the court system works. The website launched in fall 2015 providing information on last year's local judicial races. This year the website provides information on 157 judicial races across the state, including 3 Ohio Supreme Court seats, 27 Court of Appeals races, 116 Common Pleas Courts and 11 County Courts.

The League performed its traditional role of contacting the candidates and soliciting information for the website. It will be incumbent on all of the partners to make a vigorous effort to publicize the site, since it is new and most Ohio voters do not yet know of its existence. Materials have been developed to share with local Leagues to publicize the site and we are optimistic that over time it will help address the dearth of knowledge many Ohioans have about the role of the judiciary and the qualifications of judicial candidates. It is hoped that there will eventually be less drop-off in judicial votes compared to votes for other candidates on the ballot.

League members have participated in a series of meetings hosted by the Kettering Foundation examining public perceptions of the judicial system and how it can be improved. At the most recent meeting, participants, which included scholars and judges from around the country, discussed the interest in the courts that has been generated by the death of Justice Scalia and the vacancy on the Supreme Court of the U. S., and materials are being developed that will be available to organizations, such as local Leagues, to engage citizens in discussions about our judicial system.