

IMPACT NEWSLETTER MAY 6, 2009

imPACT E-Newsletter - Making an ImPACT: 2008 League Actions

**The League of Women Voters of Ohio
Education Fund imPACT e-newsletter.**

The purpose of these monthly emails is to provide League members and our partners with information on the most pressing reform issues affecting Ohioans today. Want to learn more about the issues, how to vote confidently and how to connect with elected officials? Visit the imPACT website at www.ohioimpact.org for the latest information and resources to---Get Educated. . .Get Involved. . . and Get Results!

Spring was the onset of a slew of Town Hall Meetings in Ohio. On March 24, the *League of Women Voters of Delaware County* hosted a Redistricting Town Hall Meeting at Ohio Wesleyan University. Former State Representative and long time League member Joan Lawrence and Ann Henkener, LWV of Ohio Redistricting Specialist, explained and illustrated how critical the redistricting is for Ohioans, and particularly emphasizing how important participation in the 2010 census is for towns and cities to get federal funds. Following this, an open forum was held with Delaware County Commissioners Tommy Thompson (President), Ken O'Brien, and Todd Hanks on redistricting and other local issues.

The well-attended group (78%) felt that thought redistricting was important, and half of the respondents reported that they would consider contacting an elected official. Our representatives in government can only hear us if we Speak Up! ([Click here to link with Speak Up](#) on the LWVOhioimPACT web page.)

The League of Women Voters of Metro Columbus hosted its third Town Hall Meeting, which dealt with Judicial Independence March 26. The Honorable Kim Browne and attorney Scott Sturges answered questions and discussing Judicial independence, Judicial Campaign Finance, Judicial Recusal and specifically, the recent Supreme Court hearing on the controversial judicial case Caperton v. Massey Coal in West Virginia.* Judge Browne showed how judicial campaign contributions are reported and tracked. (*Did you know that the Caperton v. Massey Coal case inspired John Grisham's book, "The Appeal"?)

The League of Women Voters of Marion hosted its third very successful Town Hall Meeting on April 16 at the Tri-River Career Center. Honorees included Marion County Sheriff's Office Auxiliary Unit, Celebrating 40 Years of Service; Jerry Davis, accepting on behalf of Betty L. Davis, who began a bereaved parents group; and Joe Dedany, who developed the Ohio Heartland Community Action Fund.

This Marion event heralded the topic: "Redistricting Reform, Our Congressman Forever? The Politics of Congressional District Line-Drawing." The four concerns of redistricting, compactness, communities of interest, representative fairness and competitiveness, were ranked in order of importance by participants. More than 120 people attended and joined in the discussion. Ann Henkener spoke on the mechanics and effects of gerrymandering of the Karen Rainey spoke on the importance of communities being accurately counted in the census, because

the census totals determine the number of congressional representatives and the amounts of federal money which go to the districts. 81% of participants surveyed said that Marion's economy is of major importance, 71% said redistricting was important and 56% of the people who attended said they were motivated to contact a public official.

The League of Women Voters of Portsmouth/Scioto County hosted the Town Hall Meeting on April 20 concerning "Election Law: Closed and Open Primaries" at the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center. Peg Rosenfield, Ohio Elections Specialist, and Linda Jones, regional liaison from the Secretary of State's office, were the speakers. Approximately 85 people were in attendance to also honor retiring Judge Richard Schisler, and County Engineer Clyde Willis.

Attendees learned that closed primaries mean that a voter must be registered with either major party and can vote in that primary only. Open primaries are open to all registered voters regardless of party. Closed primaries, which is the current Ohio system, disenfranchises voters if they are not affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican party.

The League of Women Voters of Bowling Green hosted a Judicial Independence Town Hall Meeting on April 21, which was co-sponsored by the Wood County Bar Association. They honored Judge Charles Kurfess for his service. The two speakers were Judge David Woessner and Max Rayle. The roundtable discussions were lively, and once again, the discussion also turned to elements of Grisham's "The Appeal" and the case of Caperton v. Massey Coal. 95% of this crowd surveyed said that Judicial Independence was an important issue in their community and 53% said they would consider contacting an elected official.

The League of Women Voters of the Perrysburg Area hosted a Town Hall Meeting on Election Reform with Ann Henkener and Peg Rosenfield on April 28. There was a reactor panel which included two members of the Wood County Board of Elections: Terry Burton, and Debbie Hazard. The format was especially interesting: Ms. Henkener interviewed Ms. Rosenfield, who is an expert in the area of Election Law. Questions were posed by the audience by tables. There were many concerns from these table groups, many concerned with the possibility of voter fraud, and the speakers used facts to demonstrate the scarcity of voter fraud in Ohio.

Remember that Town Hall Meetings are a great way to learn about political issues in the state of Ohio and how to make an impact on these important issues. It is a great way to connect with other concerned citizens, organizations. Hosting honorees can also unite a community by remembering those who serve the greater good. If you would like to host a Town Hall Meeting or find out more, contact Mary Helen Hart, imPACT Program coordinator, at democracy@lwvohio.org 614.469.1505 or 614.256.3225