



The Norman VOTER

September 2007

League of Women Voters of Norman

Established in 1925

LWVN
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Constitution Day Town Hall Meeting “One Nation Under Surveillance”

A Public Forum

Featuring a Panel of Constitutional Scholars

Moderated by Dr. Robin Meyere

Monday, September 17, 2007

OU Law Center
300 W. Timberdell Road

Reception at 6:00 p.m. in the Faculty Lounge
Program at 6:30 p.m. in the Dick Bell Courtroom

FREE and Open to the Public

Sponsored by ACLU of Oklahoma Foundation; League of Women Voters of Norman; Common Cause of Oklahoma; The Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma; Oklahoma County A. Phillip Randolph Institute; The Peace House, LULAC, OKC Council; NAACP of Oklahoma City; and the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Norman.

Message from Barbara Robinson

“I have a voice. I vote” This is a refrigerator magnet that I keep to remind me that we need to take every opportunity to state clearly our opinion on issues that affect our community. I get all kinds of e-mail messages about various opportunities to respond, but I have to admit that I don’t respond very often.

The LWV has positions on local, state and national issues arrived at by its members through study and consensus. It is good that we have members who remind us that we should look to our positions for ways to respond locally to issues that worry us. Some ill-informed citizens seem to take every opportunity to respond to concerns, but the League is often silent. Let’s see if we can be more active during the next program year.

On our fall agenda we are planning a meeting on immigration. This is an issue of importance that the national League has chosen to study. Also we are planning to meet the new city manager, who may suggest some items that we might look at, and we are supporting recycling and voter registration. We may also add topics that you suggest. Please consult the League calendar on page six for more information.

September 17 is Constitution Day

Constitution Day commemorates the ratification of the United States Constitution, which took place on September 17, 1787. By design, the Oklahoma Constitution was ratified on September 17 one hundred years ago. The LWV of Norman is pleased to join with other organizations in sponsoring a special event on Constitution Day featuring a panel of constitutional scholars. The event will be held at the OU School of Law. We hope that our members will take advantage of this opportunity to participate in a discussion of current issues relating to constitutional law.

The history of Constitution Day is explained in the following excerpt from "News from the Library of Congress," September 5, 2007.



Established by Congress in 2004, Constitution Day is an American federal holiday that recognizes the ratification of the United States Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787, at the Constitutional Convention. Introduced by West Virginian Senator Robert Byrd, the legislation expands the Sept. 17 celebration of Citizenship Day, which President Harry Truman established in 1952 to recognize everyone who had become a U.S. citizen during the previous year. In combining the observances, the act mandates that all publicly funded educational institutions provide programming on the history of the American Constitution on that day.

President Lincoln Stretched the Provisions of the US Constitution During the Civil War

This article includes excerpts from *Lincoln on Leadership*, by Donald T. Phillips

Abraham Lincoln not only redefined the presidency during the civil war by greatly expanding the presidential powers, but he substantially changed the U.S. Constitution by using a new interpretation.

“...I felt that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution, through the preservation of the nation.”

—Written by Lincoln to Albert Hodges in 1864

Lincoln took advantage of the desperation and urgency of the day in order to act. He was the first president to enact conscription in order to raise an army; he directed a blockade of the Confederate states from Virginia to Texas; he suspended the writ of habeas corpus and thus declared martial law. (The military could make arrests without specific charges. The Supreme Court ruled that only Congress had such powers. Congress, however, ratified Lincoln’s ruling.) Lincoln was labeled a tyrant and dictator by some, but he stood firm.

Lincoln significantly changed the government’s executive function and responsibility, though he had not intended to do so. The change came about because he was determined to use any measures necessary to preserve this country, even if his interpretation of his presidential powers meant stretching the Constitution of the U.S. to its limits.

LWVUS Study of Immigration



Editor's Note: The LWVUS study of immigration was adopted by delegates to the 2006 LWVUS convention. The national study committee established the scope of the study "to include the underlying values and principles regarding immigration, reasons for immigration, current federal immigration policy, and the impact of immigration." The following is an overview of a publication that was recommended as a resource by the national study committee.

An overview of *Immigration and America's Future: A NEW CHAPTER*

A report from an independent task force led by Spencer Abraham and Lee Hamilton and a bipartisan group of leaders and experts on immigration.

by Phoebe Schmitz

This report analyzes the economic, social and demographic figures behind the current immigration in the U.S. It concludes that the benefits of immigration far outweigh the disadvantages – it finds that immigration is essential to our national interests.

The U.S. is currently experiencing its 4th peak of immigration since becoming a nation. This peak began in the 1980s and coincides with globalization and the transfer from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based economy. In the 1990s we reached our highest level of immigrants– 14 million, including legal and illegal.

Why is immigration important?

Each of the four peaks of immigration has unleashed social changes and political reactions, which have shaped our nations' character, society and economy. Each peak also led to a well being not possible without the accompanying large-scale immigration.

Between 2000 and 2020 we will experience a worker gap because there will be no net increase of native-born workers age 25-54. We will need millions more young, tax-paying immigrants to fill in for the shortfall of native workers (NW).

We have a worker skill gap. As more natives receive high school and college degrees, there are fewer NW available to fill low-skilled jobs. We also have a shortage of scientists and engineers at the other end of the spectrum.

Illegal immigration has a mixed impact on the economic security of NW. Some parts of the country are affected by loss of job opportunities and lower wage scales. In other parts of the country illegal immigration has some positive economic effects for NW: lower prices for food, goods and housing and higher wages and employment.

What is wrong with our current immigration policy?

Our immigration policy is broken and outdated, which is why illegal immigration is dangerously high (12 million plus), and border deaths are a humanitarian crisis. Also, many Americans are skeptical about our government's ability to manage immigration.

continued next page

LWVUS Study of Immigration *continued*

The current rules for legal immigration do not work well. Legal immigrants with families have unreasonable delays for family unification, i.e. sometimes it takes a parent 14 years to bring their child to this country. It is impossible to legally meet labor demand for workers in this country in some areas because only 5,000 worldwide visas are approved annually.

The federal government has put an unsustainable burden on state and local governments by its failure to adapt to new realities of illegal immigration. States and communities face demands for health care and education, which drain their economies, while the federal government benefits from immigration taxes paid at the federal level (income taxes for workers using false social security IDs).

“It is in this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning...Problems call forth our courage and our wisdom; indeed they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow...It is for this reason that wise people learn not to dread but actually welcome problems.”

—M. Scott Peck
The Road Less Traveled

The Immigration Policy and System for the 21st Century

Based on this task force’s analysis of economic, social and demographic factors relating to immigration, we need to overhaul our nation’s system of managing immigration. We need reforms to simplify the systems of welcoming immigrants and of enforcing the rules of immigration.

We need flexible immigration ceilings to allow for the changing demands for workers, and immigrants need to be allowed to live in more than one country.

Immigration is a very complex issue and needs several parts that work together: border and employer enforcement of immigration laws; increase of legal immigration limits; labor protection for workers; and international cooperation.

Finally, we need education and job preparedness reforms for our citizens; then immigration can complement our overall economic system. Our immigration system should be fair and governed by rules which are enforceable, practical and which meet our nation’s interests and values.

American Ideals: Paraphrased Comments by Jim Wallis of Sojourner’s Organization

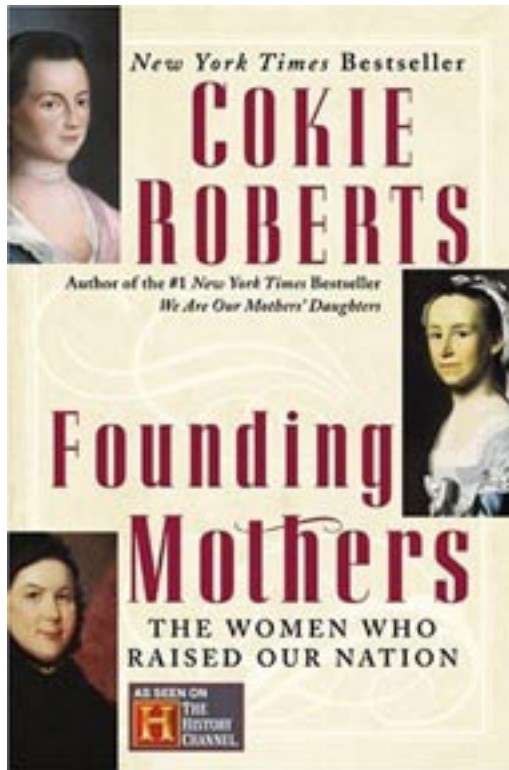
The Aspen Ideas Festival took place earlier this year during the week of July 4th. One panel at the festival was called “What Does America Stand for Today?” On Independence Day various panelists talked about the American virtues of liberty, equality, justice and equal opportunity. One panelist praised the country for being an “open society” to immigrants. But, another panelist in this discussion session set off fire works when he pointed out that “what America stands for” looks very different from outside the U.S. in countries around the world, where they are talking about the inequalities of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay and the mistake of the Iraq war.

Another panel, which included Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, talked about the importance of the U.S. accepting the rule of law and having a Constitution which expands democracy and extends inclusion.

In defense of the U.S., Wallis, who was a speaker at this festival, pointed out that some framers of the Constitution failed to live up to its ideals, and our history shows a country constantly struggling to live up to its own highest goals. He suggested that each of us keep in mind our ideals and think about how we might best put them into practice.

BOOK REVIEW

by Phoebe Schmitz



This fascinating book is based on stories of women who “had the ear” of the Founding Fathers. Some of the women whose letters were saved include Martha Washington, who spent winters at Valley Forge, nursing troops and taking warm clothes that several women had made for them; Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, whose often repeated plea to John, “Remember the ladies,” was one of the most well-known statements by a Founding Mother; Deborah Read Franklin, wife of Ben Franklin, who spent 16 of their 17 years of marriage in Europe, while Deborah was left alone to manage the postal service and real estate ventures in Philadelphia, and protect their home place from the British soldiers.

While the men were away fighting in the Revolutionary War, the women spent time boosting morale in the Army camp, serving as spies, boycotting British goods, raising money for troops, and defending their homes. During the war they were marveled for their strength by generals from both sides. These same women were also having children, raising them and burying some throughout the war.

After reading the letters of these women, Cokie Roberts came to the conclusion that they were not unique – they did what women (and men) do no matter what the generation or circumstances. They carried on.

Here are a few quotes from letters communicated between Abigail and John Adams:

Abigail Adams, who was politically astute, had many ideas about what the Continental Congress should do and wrote to her husband: “If we mean to have heroes, statesmen and philosophers, we should have learned women.” John answered her with, “Your sentiments on the importance of education in women are exactly agreeable to my own...” But he did not fight for the women’s right to vote, even though Abigail wrote in each of her letters to him, “Remember the ladies!”

In other letters to John, Abigail pleaded with him to return home to help defend their home place and their children. John wrote back, “In case of real danger...fly to the woods with our children, and take a gun.” John, however, remained in Philadelphia at the Continental Congress.

Abigail wrote in 1776, “I long to hear that you have declared an independency...I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands...If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.” (Men at this time legally owned their wives under the prevailing English law.) Her last message to John was, “I cannot say that I think you very generous to the ladies, for whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to men,...you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives. But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, [it is] very liable to be broken.”

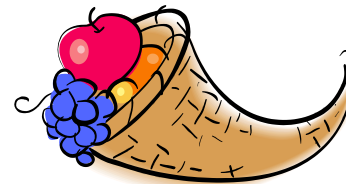
League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a voting member of the League. Associate membership is available for students not yet eligible to vote.



LWVN 2007 Fall Calendar



Sept 12	Wed	11:30 am	LWVN Steering Committee Meeting Memorial Presbyterian Church 601 24th Ave SW
Sept 17	Mon	6:00 pm	Constitution Day Town Hall Meeting OU Law Center 300 W. Timberdell Road (see details page 1)
Oct 10	Wed	11:30 am	LWVN Steering Committee Meeting Memorial Presbyterian Church 601 24th Ave SW
Oct 16	Tue	7–8:30 pm	Issues Meeting: Immigration Speaker: Juanita Vaesquez-Sykes of LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) Memorial Presbyterian Church 601 wrth Ave SW (background information pages 3-4)
Nov 6	Tue	11:00 am	Issues Meeting: Lunch with Norman City Manager Memorial Presbyterian Church 601 24th Ave SW

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NORMAN

P.O. Box 720621

Norman, OK 73070