



The Voter

League of Women Voters of Columbia/Boone

VOLUME 76, No. 6

JUNE, 2011

Our one and only fundraiser of the year is coming up VERY soon on Wednesday, June 8th. It will be a performance of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" at Columbia Entertainment Company, 1800 Nelwood Drive. Come at 6:30 pm for the Social Hour of finger food and drinks. After remarks from the director, Monica Senecal, curtain time is 7:30 pm.

In your May Voter, you found tickets for this event. We hope you will purchase these tickets for yourself and/or others. Tickets are \$25 each, payable by check to:

League of Women Voters,
c/o Liz Schmidt, Treasurer
1700 Forum Blvd., #3101
Columbia, MO 65203

If the date doesn't suit your calendar, perhaps we can find someone to use your tickets. Just let Liz know at 445-0655.

Spelling Bee Committee - Linda Brown, Win Colwill, Barbara Knowles, Joni O'Connor, Sarah Seat and Pam Springsteel



See you soon!

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

June

- **Board Planning Mtg., Sat., June 4, 9:30 am, 821 NW Park Lane**
- **"The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," Wed., June 8, 6:30 pm, CEC**
- **Civil Liberties Com. Mtg., Thurs., June 9, 1:15 pm., Library**
- **Energy Matters Com. Mtg., Tues., June 21, 1 pm, Library**

Member Updates:

- Correction: **Ava Fajen:** email should be avafajen@mac.com
- New member: **Jan Swaney**, 2709 Westbrook Way, 65203, 442-3172, j.swaney@mchsi.com

Columbia's Redistricting Committee

The League is planning to have a team of observers sitting in on the meetings of the newly appointed Redistricting Committee. Are you interesting in being a part of this team? If so, contact League President Linda Kaiser at 474-1407 or send her an email at lindaskaiser@gmail.com.

This is a good opportunity to see city government in action.

Fact Checking

Want to check the accuracy of allegations or emails? Go to ...

**www.politifact.com or
www.factcheck.org
www.snopes.com**

Good Intentions



There has been much discussion over the past few weeks among League members (and some non-League citizens) about the recent LWVUS ad on clean air that specifically mentioned Missouri's Senator Claire McCaskill (D). As I hope that most of you now know, a similar ad was run in Massachusetts that referenced a similar vote by Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown (R). The ad campaign was funded by a \$1.4 million grant from the Partnership Project, one of the coalitions to which the League belongs (for more information, see www.saveourevironment.org/)

Currently, there is a strong movement among some in the federal government to seriously weaken, if not eliminate, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Clean Air Act and many other environmental protection acts. The intentions of LWVUS were to influence the future votes of these two senators and to focus attention among citizens and media on the importance of the EPA to both public health and the environment and to generate discussion on this issue.

Further, the League has long believed in holding political and governmental figures accountable for their decisions. For an organization that is both political and non-partisan (a difficult concept for many non-League citizens and some League members to fully understand), a current challenge is doing so in what appears to be a continual election cycle whereby the campaign for re-election begins the day after any election (whether the next vote is 2 years or 6 years away).

Unfortunately, although there is support both within the state and nationally for this type of campaign, many feel that the naming of only one senator in each of the states in which the ads were shown violates the spirit (if not the letter) of the Leagues historical nonpartisan stance. These views have been shared by both the local and state leagues to LWVUS representatives on several occasions. A letter reasserting these concerns and reaffirming the commitment to both advocacy and accountability from political figures is being sent the LWVUS president and board. As soon as we are assured that this letter has been received, it will be shared with all of you (either via email or in the next Voter or both).

The process by which this ad campaign occurred will continue to be a focus of discussion, both within the state league and our local board. We strongly believe in working within the League to strengthen and improve it (although we sometimes disagree on specific tactics), recognizing that neither individuals nor organizations are perfect.

Linda Kaiser
President

LWV Presents: Job Hunters Can Get Help



Dr. Bill Elder discussed an important tool for job hunters during the May LWV CAT TV show. The Missouri Career Exploration Tool is a result of a collaborative effort by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) and OSEDA to make occupational data readily available to anyone. An easy-to-use interface facilitates searching for short-and long-term occupational projections in hundreds of fields for Missouri as a whole or for 10 regions within the state. Information the tool provides includes educational requirements, wages, and the projected number of openings for each occupation. Go to missourieconomy.org to explore the website for MERIC.

Dr. Elder is the Director of Social and Economic Data at UMC. Also participating in our show was Darin Preis, Executive Director of Central Missouri Community Action and Jim Robertson, Managing Editor of the Columbia Daily Tribune. The topic of the show was The Coming Economic Tsunami: Who Will Survive? The program will be shown throughout May and is available at any time on CAT TV's website columbiaaccess.tv.

The topic for our June show is What REALLY Happened in the 2011 Missouri Legislative Session? The show will be shown live on Tuesday, June 7th at 7:00 p.m. Please, tune in!

Carol Schreiber

Eleanor Goodge Award—2011

Marilyn McLeod is the Eleanor Goodge awardee for 2011. A 27-year League member and current League Historian, Marilyn is retiring from the Columbia Public Library this month. In presenting the award to Marilyn at the annual meeting, League President Linda Kaiser said the following:

"This year, Marilyn is retiring after many years as a reference librarian at the Daniel Boone Library, now the Columbia Public Library. Her current title is Manager of Reference and Information Services. Marilyn's professional involvement and expertise have enriched not only our own library but the libraries of Missouri as a whole as well. She exemplifies the professional librarian's commitment to an educated citizenry, to literacy, and to access to information for all. This is the same commitment that has driven the work of the League of Women Voters for 91 years, so it is entirely fitting that Marilyn's steadfast focus on this central value of citizen self-education has drawn her to give generously of her time and knowledge to the League, year after year, in both visible and quiet ways.

Many LWV educational and voter-service programs are co-sponsored by the Columbia Public Library and many smaller League committees meet there. Marilyn has been instrumental, not only in helping us schedule meeting and events, but in the practical arrangements for our public forums. Many times this includes hauling chairs and tables, re-arranging rooms, arranging computers and projectors, as well as setting up the refreshment table and greeting participants and attendees at the door. The Voter Service Committee counts Marilyn as a valuable member.

Many know her as a public face of the library, but in many ways, she has been quietly building the public face of the League of Women Voters.

The public library's reference desk has always been available to LWV, helping us to distribute our Citizen Flyers, printing our Observer Reports in the 1970's and 1980's, and helping us get our Voter Service information into the hands of school children when parents need help finding candidate and other information. By the end of the 1990's, Marilyn realized that civic organizations like the League needed a new kind of public presence in the new world of the World Wide Web and she created the League's first website.

As a professional librarian and a guardian of culture, Marilyn is also ideally suited for her role as the Historian of our local League - a role that encompasses both making the past vivid to the people of today and organizing and preserving the events of today for the historians of tomorrow.

For the LWV 70th anniversary in 1990, Marilyn constructed display panels of LWV history – one panel for each decade. Marilyn extracted the archival material comprising the exhibit from the League material held by the State Historical Society of Missouri. Marilyn has also given talks to LWV members that bring to life the history of the women who preceded us.

Looking forward to tomorrow's history, Marilyn has graciously accepted decades of file boxes of imperfectly organized LWV materials for eventual deposit at the State Historical Society. As a librarian with some archival training, she knows that this material must not only be stored, but identified, processed and curated. The history of our organization has rested in her capable hands all these years, and we look forward to recognizing her, and, more than that, we look forward to doing all we can to support her important work as the living League's "Ambassador To the Future."

(pictured, from left to right, are Library Director Melissa Carr, Marilyn McLeod and Linda Kaiser)



Here in America we are descended in blood and in spirit from revolutionists and rebels -- men and women who dare to dissent from accepted doctrine. As their heirs, may we never confuse honest dissent with disloyal subversion.

-Dwight D. Eisenhower

Funding and Equity Issues



History of Federal Efforts Related to Equity in Public Schooling: In the 1896 case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court determined that the equal protection clause of the United States Constitution permitted racially separate schools as long as they had equal facilities. Separate but “equal” schools were sanctioned for close to 70 years.

Prior to the 1950s, federal involvement in education was almost nonexistent. Even the ambitious legislation of the New Deal had little to do with elementary and secondary education. However, with the 1954 United State Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the attention changed to discussions and decisions dealing with equal opportunity. The ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* reversed the 1896 decision and declared that state laws were unconstitutional if they supported establishing separate public schools for black and white students.

In the 1960s, the focus of federal policies moved away from redistribution of funds, which lay at the heart of the New Deal, and attempted to place equality of opportunity at the center of the nation's social welfare policies. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed racial discrimination. This was followed by President Lyndon B. Johnson introducing his education plan (which became the Elementary and Secondary School Act {ESEA}) in 1965. Title VI of ESEA outlawed the allocation of federal funds to segregated programs.

However, there was still intense discussion about the meaning of “equal.” For some, equal opportunity meant that people with different potential were given relatively the same chances to advance to the best of their individual abilities. That could mean giving more difficult tasks to gifted students, so that they would be challenged as much as non-gifted students. For others, equal opportunity meant to treat all students in the same way – leading to a leveling of performance.

As part of ESEA, Congress authorized a study on educational equality in the United States. The resulting 1965 report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (also known as the *Coleman Report*), found student background and socio-economic status were more important in determining educational outcomes than differences in school resources. This study of 150,000 students in the early 1960s has had a lasting influence in debates on housing and busing integration policies, preschool education, voucher payment levels, and charter schools.

Initially, ESEA was intended to provide additional resources to districts serving high concentrations of low-income families with little federal involvement in how the resources were utilized by state and local education authorities. As a result of disagreements about the causes of educational inequalities, ESEA funds eventually were allocated to support a wide variety of programs in local school systems including teaching innovations, cultural and social enrichment programs, library improvements, parental involvement activities, nutrition programs, and social and medical services.

In the first years of ESEA, two major programs were initiated. Title I provided resources for the education of low-income students. As of 2011, Title I is administered under the No Child Left Behind Act and is funded at \$14.6 billion. Title VI provided grants for “handicapped” children.

Beginning with Title VI, the story of special education funding illustrates how, over time, federal legislative enactments, bureaucratic regulations and court mandates in education became increasingly numerous and prescriptive as the federal influence grew. Title VI continued to expand over time as the definition of “handicapped” was broadened to include more students.

In 1970, Title VI was revised as the Education of the Handicapped Act and was separated from ESEA. Eventually, this program became the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees free, appropriate education to children with disabilities from birth to age 18 or 21. Under IDEA, Congress recognized additional costs of educating students with disabilities (\$1,713 per student) and set a goal of providing 40 percent of the average pupil costs for qualifying students. In the past 40 years, funding has never exceeded that level, and usually has been below 40 percent. Currently, federal funding covers about 17 percent of the costs. As with Title I, IDEA is administered under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In 2010, IDEA was funded at \$11.5 billion.

ESEA did not provide general federal aid to public schools; instead it provided “categorical” support - aid that was targeted to a specific student population such as low-income students. While school districts generally appreciate receiving the financial assistance, they frequently bemoan a loss of local control over their schools. According to McGuinn & Hess (2005) the creation of federal categorical programs required that federal educational institutions shift from what had been largely an information-gathering and disseminating role to a more supervisory role in the administration of the new federal funds and programs.

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One of the fundamental premises behind the idea of compensatory education, and of the ESEA more generally, was that state and local education authorities had failed to ensure equal educational opportunities for their students and that they could not be trusted to do so in the future without federal intervention. (p.8)

According to Darling-Hammond (2010), by the 1970s, the emphasis on equity which was promoted through ESEA led to increased spending on urban schools, resulting in higher-paid teachers, fewer teacher shortages and smaller achievement gaps. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics showed that 1988 saw the smallest racial differences in reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. However, many of the programs targeting urban and poor rural schools and healthcare were cut in the 1980s. Accordingly, the goal of providing additional resources to low-income students has changed over the years. Ninety-four percent of the school districts in the United States have ultimately received ESEA funds, and the Act allowed Title I funds to be used for a variety of purposes including hiring additional staff and purchasing classroom equipment.

Unfortunately, during the past 50 years, since *Brown v. Board of Education*, Ladson-Billings (2006) noted that our schools have become re-segregated. She observed that currently, almost three-fourths of Black and Latino/a students attend schools that are predominately non-white. More than 2 million Black and Latino/a students attend schools that are predominantly isolated.

The racial achievement gap has fluctuated since 1988, but it never returned to the narrowed levels of that year. Contrary to Coleman's much-publicized report in 1966, these data appear to suggest that federal policies and funding can have a profound effect on schools. More recently, economists have linked increases in student achievement and reductions in achievement gaps with increased school funding investments in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Illinois (Goertz & Weiss, 2007; Guryan, 2001).

In 1991, Ferguson used a larger data set than Coleman had used and found that spending levels did have an effect which increased as the target of the funding moved closer to teaching students. Accordingly, Ferguson determined that student learning would be most profoundly affected by investments in teacher quality measured by assessments of skills and knowledge as well as by experience and advanced degrees.

Since 1990, rather than looking at equity, most lawsuits have focused on adequacy – whether a state is providing local districts with just enough funding and resources to give students a basic education. Researchers (Kennedy, 2005; Odden & Pincus, 2008) have developed a relatively complete research-based model which provides a means for calculating the cost of an adequate education. They define an adequate education as one which includes full-day kindergarten, core class sizes of 15 for Grades K-3 and 25 for Grades 4-12, specialist teachers, and other easily-quantifiable factors.

The weighted per-pupil estimated costs at a prototypical school are \$9,641 according to the evidence-based model proposed by Odden and Pincus(2008). This is \$566 more than the average spent per student on a national basis. Closer inspection shows that in 30 of the 50 states, additional revenues would be needed to reach the estimated cost level as defined by the model.

Funding of education from different sources: Federal education monies primarily go to individual schools from state and local districts. The federal government adds less than 10 percent to the local education budgets, yet it contributes significantly to the rules for how the funding is used. Additionally, the United States invests 5 percent of its GDP in public education. Nearly half of the K-12 education funding in the United States is intended to come from the states, drawn from a combination of income taxes, fees and other taxes. However, some states resemble Illinois, where the state share is only 27 percent. The remainder usually emanates from local property taxes. States which rely heavily on property taxes to fund education tend to have large inequities in school funding which mirror the inequity of wealth in the society at large.

Inequity of wealth in the United States: Hurst (2007) has noted that inequities in wealth stem from the fact that wealthy people earn much of their income from investments of inherited funds, while the poor earn all of their income from jobs, and they spend it on food, shelter, transportation, etc. The poor do not have enough left over to save, much less to pass on to future generations. Norton and Ariely (2010) report a general agreement among economists that wealth inequality in the United States is currently at a "historic high."

In a pie chart, Norton and Ariely depict the percentage of wealth possessed by each quintile (dividing the population into 5 equal pieces). In the United States, the wealthiest 20 percent of the population owns 84 percent of the total wealth, the second wealthiest 20 percent owns 11 percent, and so on down to the poorest 40 percent, which owns less than 1 percent of the total wealth. Yet Norton and Ariely (2010) discovered that most Americans apparently believe that the distribution of wealth in the United States is far more equitable than it truly is. Furthermore, the authors determined that 92 percent of the Americans from all economic groups in their representative sample would prefer a distribution which resembles that of Sweden.

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When Bell, Bernstein, and Greenberg (2008) compared the United States to industrialized European nations – we have one of the highest poverty rates for children (22.6 percent). In the same study, Bell et al. found that our country does less than any of the others to reduce the effects of poverty for low-income families. After government transfers through tax policies, cash benefits, housing, health care subsidies and child care assistance, the United States still has a child poverty rate of 18.4 percent.

What are the effects of inequities in school funding? You will recall that Ferguson (1991) and others found that the quality of teachers has a strong effect on student learning. However, Darling-Hammond (2010) has determined that highly qualified teachers are more frequently found in wealthier schools and school districts in the United States. More experienced and higher paid teachers often choose to teach in more affluent areas. These experienced teachers often can demand better working conditions. The practice of lowering or waiving credentialing standards to fill classrooms in high-minority, low-income schools—a practice that is unheard of in high-achieving nations and in other professions—became commonplace in many American states during the 1990s (p. 41).

She cited two of the studies she conducted which documented this situation. In 2002, she found that Massachusetts students in schools serving the highest concentrations of minority students were five times more likely to have uncertified teachers than were students in schools serving the fewest minority students. Similarly, in South Carolina and Texas she determined that the ratio was four to one.

In addition to hiring less-qualified teachers, Darling-Hammond (2010) contended that schools with primarily minority students have often had less challenging and current course requirements, curricula, materials, and equipment. In racially mixed schools, she calls curricular tracks “color-coded.” Darling-Hammond supported this charge with research conducted in 1993 by Jeannie Oakes:

Latino students who scored near the 60th percentile on standardized tests were less than half as likely as White and Asian students to be placed in college prep classes. And even those who scored above the 90th percentile on such tests had only about a 50 percent chance of being placed in a college prep class, while their White and Asian peers were virtually assured of such placements...Oakes’s team found similar patterns for African American and Hispanic students in the Midwestern and East Coast cities they studied. (p. 57)

The education of American Indians has not fared better than that of lower-class African American and Hispanic students. It is noteworthy that schools on American Indian reservations do not even get funds from property taxes, since Indian reservation property is exempt from taxation. Beaulieu (2000) observed: *...schools with predominantly Indian student populations experience... extremely high student and staff mobility. These schools also tend to serve student populations disproportionately affected by violence and substance abuse that negatively impact school readiness and individual capacity to learn. These problems are also compounded by the fact that schools serving Native students usually lack the appropriate knowledge base for accomplishing the professional development and curricular development objectives necessary for sustained improvement while also meeting unique social linguistic and cultural needs.* (p. 30)

Where Are We Now? Today’s economy is more demanding than ever, so dropping out of high school is often disastrous. And yet, according to Bureau of Labor statistics reported in 2009, African-American dropouts had less than a 25 percent chance of getting a job while white dropouts who had not completed high school had a greater chance – approaching 45 percent.

By the time they were 21, 59 percent of white high school graduates not in college were employed, while only 46 percent of African-American high school graduates not in college were employed.

According to Fiscella & Kitzman (2009), these educational inequities have profound effects on health suggesting the following data:

A 30-year-old black male with no more than 9 years of education can be expected to live on average 10 fewer years than a white male of the same age and education.

Education affects health by impacting future occupational status, income, neighborhood residence and wealth.

Education also affects health independently of socio-economic factors, because it is strongly associated with a range of risk behaviors: smoking, diet, physical activity, early sexual activity, teenage pregnancy and crime.

The racial gap in education is a primary contributor to racial disparities in mortality.

Child poverty, low birth weight and lack of child health insurance largely explain racial disparity in adult health; these effects are mediated through disparities in educational achievement.

The remainder of this article by Jean Pierce for the Education Study will appear in the next Voter. However, to read it all now (and to read all the articles for this study), go to www.lwv.org and click on “Projects and Programs” on the “For Members” tab.

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(875-4295)**Meetings****Board:** 4th Monday, 6:30 pm,
Boone Electric Coop**Civil Liberties:** 2nd Thurs., 1:15 pm***Education:** 4th Thurs., 6:30 pm***Energy Matters:** 3rd Tuesday, 1 pm***Fundraising:** Varies**Peace:** 2nd Fri., 9 am***Voter Service:** Varies*

*Meetings at Library

Membership

If you are a member and wish to receive a membership list, please contact Liz Schmidt at 445-0655 or email at lizschmidt@centurytel.net.

To join the League, fill in the information below and mail it, with your check, to Membership Chair, League of Women Voters, PO Box 239, Columbia, MO 65205. Dues are \$55 for individuals, \$80 for a household and \$15 for local students. (An "11" after your name indicates paid for 2011.)

Name _____

Email Address _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

I am particularly interested in _____

(Note: Tax deductible donations to the Education Fund should be a separate check, payable to LWVMO Education Fund.)

For more information, contact Liz Schmidt at 445-0655 or Linda Brown at 447-3939.

Websiteslwv.columbia.missouri.org (local)lwvmisouri.org (state)lwv.org (national)

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Columbia – Boone County MO

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*LWV: Where hands-on work to safeguard
democracy leads to civic improvement.*



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

June 2011						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 Board planning mtg., 9:30 am- 3:30 pm
5	6	7	8 <i>The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, 6:30 p.m., CEC</i>	9 Civil Liberties Com., 1:15 pm, Library	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21 Energy Matters Mtg., Library, 1 pm	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	July 1	July 2
July 3	July 4	July 5	July 6	July 7	July 8	July 9