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Huntington Area League of Women Voters

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August 1997

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United Nations reform, topic of September meeting

"United Nations Reform - What, When, How?" will be the topic under discussion when the Huntington League of Women Voters opens its new program year on Monday, September 15, 1997.

Dr. Clair W. Matz, Professor of political science at Marshall University will be the speaker for the event which will be held at the Woodlands, 1 Bradley Foster Drive (see directions in next column) at 7:30 p.m.

Professor Matz is a specialist on international politics and regularly teaches a course on the U.N. and other international organizations. "The UN today is not what it was five years ago - or even five months ago." said Matz. He will explain criticisms made by Senator Jesse Helms and others while outlining Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plan which was announced in July, 1997.

The meeting is free and open to the public. Bring a friend and a prospective League member!

Directions to The Woodlands

Travel south on 5th Street Road. Go past Larado's on the left and Hills on the right. At the light past Hill's turn right. Proceed up the hill and turn left at the sign which says "Woodlands". Follow main road to the parking lot. Please park in the parking lot. Go in the main entrance. Walk toward the fireplace. Turn right. The multipurpose room is down the hall on the left.

Thank you, Gracias, Merci, . . .

To - Linda Rowe, Rebecca Bookwalter, Wendy Thomas, moderators and Susan Kelz, Justine Bowen, and Kirsten Bagley, helpers at the Spring Candidates for Council and Mayor meetings.

To - Ann Csernica for the Candidates Questionnaire for the newspaper.

To - Doris Johnson for the *great* Summer Fun Flyer.

To - Ann Csernica, Beth Bauserman, Bernice Steirn and Helen Gibbins who were Social Studies Fair Judges.

Amendment to WV Constitution up for vote on September 27

A special statewide election is scheduled for September 27, asking voters to decide whether they wish to amend the West Virginia Constitution -- "To authorize the investment of state or public funds in common stocks and other equity instruments and to further require the Legislature to establish guidelines and procedures for the prudent investment of such funds."

The West Virginia constitution currently prohibits the state from becoming an "owner, or stockholder, in any company or association in this state or elsewhere, formed for any purpose whatever." In 1863, modern corporate law did not exist; nor did the Security and Exchange Commission nor the stock market. The concern was not stock ownership as we know it today, but instead the fear that government officials would invest in questionable or nepotistic ventures. West Virginia is currently the only state which prohibits investments in stocks. (From LWVWV VOTER)

In 1988, West Virginia lost over \$250 million in investments in bonds. At that time the Board of investments consisted of the Auditor, Governor, and Treasurer. In 1997, the West Virginia legislature created an Investment Management Board with ten members from the investment and pension management professions and three elected officials. Regular external and internal audits and comprehensive financial reports and statements are now required.

Because the League does not have a consensus on this issue, we are not taking a position; but we do encourage everyone to vote. We have been provided substantial pro-con materials on the issue. VARSITY, 304-744-9616, is a group opposing the amendment. Our local legislators and the "Yes on 1" committee, 304-340-1000, support the amendment.

Those who oppose the amendment dislike using public funds in corporations which taxpayers may oppose or in corporations which employ workers in other countries at substandard wages thus competing unfairly with West Virginia workers. They also remind us of the 1988 bond investment fiasco.

Those who support the amendment cite the large unfunded liabilities of West Virginia's pension funds; West Virginia being the only state which does not allow investments in stocks; "the flexibility to take advantage of the higher returns traditionally enjoyed in the stock market"; and strict reporting and auditing requirements on the Investment Management Board.

Applications for absentee ballots will be accepted until September 18 and absentee voting can be completed until September 23. Contact the Circuit Clerk's office, 526-8622, for more information.

Education update

by Helen Brown, Education Chair

After almost a year in progress, the Strategic Plan for Cabell County Schools has been completed and approved by the Board of Education. A planning team of educators, board members and community leaders formulated the basic objectives and strategies. Then the public was invited to join educators on one of the fourteen committees to study and suggest action plans for that strategy.

All members of the board seem enthusiastic about the plans. The scope is broad and there is a good possibility for improvement. Some of the proposals are: concentration of resources on K-3 to make sure every child can read, more decision making at individual school level, rewards for excellent teaching and increased use of community volunteers.

Each action plan has an estimated cost. Part of the first phase will be funded by the refinancing of the bonds for the two new high schools *as changes are made, funds and personnel will be reallocated.

League members who served on one of the strategy committees included Betty Barrett, Beth Bauserman, Ann Csernica and Helen Brown. Betty also was a member of the initial planning team.

*A priority of the first year will be assessing the system and how it operates.

Publication on Beijing Conference placed in local libraries

Copies of BRINGING BEIJING HOME - LOOK AT THE WORLD THROUGH WOMEN'S EYES have been placed in the Cabell County Public Library and the Marshall University Library. This publication, put out by the Presbyterian Church, USA includes a review of the highlights of the historic commitment to action from the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, September, 1995. If you are interested in purchasing a copy for \$2.00, contact Nancy Taylor at 522-3361.

Calendar

9/15 LWV Huntington Area monthly meeting; @ The Woodlands, 7:30 p.m., program by Dr. Clair Matz, "United Nations Reform - What, When, How?"

9/27 Constitutional Amendment election

Public Radio Commentary, July 8, 1997: United Nation Dues by Karen Lukens

This month (July), West Virginia's Congressman Alan Mollohan will be the spotlight as the debate over funding for the United Nations heats up. As the ranking minority member of a House Appropriations committee, he may have the opportunity to force the United States to meet its legal obligations. Currently, this country owes over a billion dollars to the UN, giving us the distinction of being the largest debtor nation.

Many Congressional leaders want to put conditions on the payment of our arrears and stretch it out over a five-year period in an attempt to force the UN to adopt sweeping reform. Withholding dues payments may actually be counter-productive to the goals of reform. Some needed changes have already been initiated, but others must be negotiated among the member nations. Failure to pay our dues undermines our negotiating position.

Americans recognize that we can't solve world problems alone. The UN has created a forum for acting on problems such as global warming, human rights, women's empowerment, population growth, terrorism, and campaigns to eradicate disease. Its peacekeeping efforts have made the world a safer place for people everywhere.

The United States benefits enormously from an effective UN, and we set a poor example and a dangerous precedent by ignoring our obligations. We can hardly be a leader of reform and the largest debtor nation at the same time. Let's hope that congressman Mollohan and his colleagues will vote to pay our dues in full to sustain the UN and its vital programs.

The LWV is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to women and men of voting age. Annual dues, not tax deductible, are \$35 individual, \$50 for two in one household.

To join, send your check to: Ann Speer, Treasurer, 706 Ridgewood, Road, Huntington, Wv 25701

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