

Women Voters League, quiet but effective

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A recent statement by Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt lauding the League of Women Voters for their efforts, after he unwittingly categorized them as relatively ineffective lobbyists, brings to attention the tremendous impact they have had on Idaho politics.

The league must be set aside in a niche of its own, for unlike such organizations as the Idaho Education Association or other organizations (such as the Association of Idaho Taxpayers, which primarily represent big business) it has no selfish motives or monetary interest.

Its main purpose is to bring about better government, and it has very little money to do this. The women spend long hours and their own money to work for causes they believe are just, although this may be argued by others.

The league is non-partisan, although the individuals are encouraged to participate in the political process. They furnish valuable service, in providing their voters' guide, political forums and other literature at elections. Because of their more liberal views it is not surprising that most of them lean strongly Democratic, but they studiously avoid partisan bias in setting consensus on issues.

For example, their budget is something like \$2,000 a year in Idaho Falls.

Batt touched on a significant point when he remarked "the leaguers, with their involvement purely from a public service standpoint, are hard-pressed to fight on equal terms with self-interest groups."

The state league has eight units in the larger cities of the state, and only 372 members, which is a decline from previous years.

At every legislative session, there are a number of them at all sessions, and also at many committee meetings to give their input. They usually are well-versed and furnish authentic information.

Batt, for example, noted the league scored successes in seven issues it endorsed the last session, but it did lose a couple.

The Post-Register

The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Wednesday, May 30, 1979 E-5

It was the league that had a key hand in bringing about state governmental reorganization, kindergarten, and the Equal Rights Amendment, land use planning, and an Idaho water plan, to mention a few.

It also has been active on many local issues, such as urban renewal and zoning in Idaho Falls, for example.

To give an idea of some of the proposals it espouses, here are those for this year. The Idaho Falls League succeeded in getting a two-year statewide study on juvenile rights.

Others on the agenda include constitutional revisions, mainly for support for optional forms of county government, shortened executive ballot, retention of annual sessions and the initiative and referendum processes, and opposition, to constitutional restrictions on taxation or spending.

It also supports an updated method for public education, good land-use management, tax reform and adequate financing of local government.

The league now has membership problems, largely brought on by the inflated economy. The Idaho Falls membership is now about 45, about half that of its peak years.

Lucretia Chew now heads the league, and branch presidents in the recent past have been Linda Milam, Mary Lou Marshall, Judy Lussie, Patty Anderson, Patricia Waltermeier, Barbara Norton and Phil Smith.

Because of inflation, members who generally have a good education background, have taken jobs to bring in a

second paycheck for the household. Despite this, they loyally cling to their membership, and many who are board members on the state and local level are working mothers.

The league's success, from long observation, comes about by its quiet lobbying method. They don't allow defeats to upset them, such as is the case, for example, with the testy Idaho Environmental Council. Instead, they keep plodding away and more frequently than not, eventually score successes.

There was a time when Idaho legislators shunned their presence, and that wasn't too long ago.

Now they are well received and are at least treated with respect and consideration, because legislators know the league members have no selfish notions of their own.

The league's beginning in Idaho Falls goes back 30 years, and one of the early leaders of the movement was Mrs. John T. Homer, well-known clubwoman and civic worker, and wife of a well known realtor who founded the Homer-Koster real estate firm.

The league has been a dominant force in the city and state political process. Not too many years ago, Mrs. Eugene (Phil) Smith was one of the moving force. She served as state president and as national treasurer. Her efforts helped to enact legislation for kindergarten, state governmental reorganization and the ERA.

The league still scrimps along on little money and much effort, and incurs opposition by the more conservative elements but it has left its mark in the past and it will continue to do so.

See picture reverse side



At league forum

Post-Register photo

IDAHO FALLS League of Women Voters always sponsor forums for candidates at major elections. Here is one in 1978 for the primary for candidates of the Second District congressional contest. From left are Stan Kress, Firth Democrat; Dan Adamson, representing Jim Jones, Jerome

Republican; Connie Hansen, representing her husband, Republican U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen, and Ralph R. Harding, Boise Democrat. Kress and Hansen won the primaries and then Hansen defeated Kress in the general.

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