Meeting of the Four State Sub-committee on Policy Advocacy

November 14, 2022, on Zoom

Present: Gretchen Sabel (MN), Kay Slama (MN), Shawn Stacey- Choinard (IL), Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins (WI), Mary Ellen Miller (IA), Tamara Prenosil (IA), Debra Cronmiller (Executive Director of LWVWI), Kristen Kern (LWVUS)

From the LWVUS website:

Kristen is the Federal Policy and Advocacy Manager at the League of Women Voters. In this role, she supports LWVUS advocacy goals, works with federal elected officials and agencies to shape legislation and regulation to align with LWV policy positions, and liaises with the LWVUS Federal Lobby Corps. She also consults with League members through Federal Action Requests to approve advocacy actions taken by state and local Leagues at the federal level.

UMRR-ILO 2022-2023 priorities were reviewed with Ms. Kerns

* MRRRI (Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative) (HR4202) a proposed non-regulatory program (similar to programs for the Great Lakes, Puget Sound, and Chesapeake Bay areas that would provide funding for restoration projects in river states that would protect our drinking water, reduce flood and storm risks and increase community resilience, and protect and restore wildlife habitat.
* SMRT (Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together) (HR4729) which would create a federal program that manages the environmental, economic and infrastructure programs for the entire river system. It is a major policy platform of The [Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative](https://www.mrcti.org/) (MRCTI), a coalition of more than 100 municipalities along the river.
* CWFA (Clean Water For All) Founded in 2016 this advocacy coalition brings together diverse organizations to advance equitable policies that promote and increase clean water protections, access, and affordability across the nation. One sub committee is working to promote increased funding for sustainable agricultural practices in the 2023 Farm Bill.

It was proposed that UMRR-ILO already has permission to participate more fully in CWFA advocacy on the Farm Bill since we have already been given official permission by LWVUS to become partners with the Mississippi River Network (MRN) and MRN is an official organizational member and one UMRR-ILO member (Tamara Prenosil – Board secretary) is an individual member and attends zoom meetings.

UMRR-ILO concerns were that we need a quick way to get permission to sign on to advocacy letters for issues that are at the federal level. We have been given permission to sign on to issues from the various state Leagues. We will avoid taking action on federal issues unless all states are aligned with the action.

Ms. Cronmiller stated the LWVUS Federal Action Request is fairly easy to complete. Ms. Kerns said the goal is to have a turnaround of 48 hours for these requests.

Ms. Kerns needs to have requests be specific (ex. speaking to a legislator, letter to the editor) so that if LWVUS staff meeting with a legislator they are not blindsided when the legislator says he was contacted by the League of a state or ILO about an issue. It would be helpful for LWVUS to have taking points and documentation as well as assurance that all four states are on board.

All requests should go directly to Kirsten Kerns in-box with a clear indication about who needs the response from her or a LWVUS official.

The UMRR-ILO needs to write a memo informing them about how the ILO will proceed with advocacy actions for the federal level.

Submitted by Tamara Prenosil