R  League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri
       Fifteen volumes, forty-four folders.

MICROFILM

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors, newsletters, and project and topical files of the League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri. Organized in 1952 as the League of Women Voters of Springfield, Missouri, the organization has been especially active in voter registration, home rule and county charter government propositions, education, planning and zoning, and other civic, social, and environmental issues.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to the study of political issues. It grew out of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1920. A League group existed in Springfield for a short time in the 1930s, but the modern history of the local chapter began on 5 May 1952, when 116 members provisionally organized the League of Women Voters of Springfield, Missouri. Mrs. Clay Payne presided over the meeting in the Greene County Courthouse. At the next meeting on 19 May 1952, Mona Weiser became the group’s first president. The group received active status from the State League in May 1953. About October 1973, the name of the organization was changed at the suggestion of the state board to league of Women Voters of Springfield-Greene County. It was changed again in April 2004 to the League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri.

Voter information and educating the public have been the most important efforts of the League. In Springfield, activities by the League have included voter registration drives, candidates’ forums, radio and television advertising and programs, and publication of voter’s guides and other informational materials. The League helped defend the city charter in two recall elections in the 1960s; five League members were elected to the City Council in the 1960s and 1970s. The League was instrumental in getting a county Home Rule proposal placed on the ballot in 1967. It was defeated, but the League led successful efforts to appoint a Home Rule Charter Commission in 1979. League members have attended and observed the workings of many city, county, and local government boards, and have been perennial appointees to many of them.

League members also have studied a wide variety of themes and topics as established by the state and national Leagues or generated by local chapters. Following League practice, subgroups study the topics and draw conclusions, which are assembled by the Board of Directors. The Board assembles the various conclusions and formulates policy. If consensus exists, a plan for action is generated and implemented, with the Board serving as executive committee and coordinating agent. In Springfield, the League has studied schools, parks, sewers, solid waste, planning and zoning, transportation, and water resources.

The records of the Springfield organization consist of minutes of meetings of the board of directors, the organization’s newsletters, and administrative and project files. Volumes 1-7 consist of the minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors, the basic governing body of the
League. The minutes begin with the organizational meeting on 5 March 1952 and continue through 27 April 2004. There are no minutes for the period 21 November 1972 to 15 May 1975.

Volumes 8-15 include newsletters published by the Springfield organization. Originally entitled Politicorama, publication began November 1952. The newsletter was renamed LWV Today beginning with the issue of August/September 1991. The collection of newsletters is complete through June 2004.

Folders 1-44 contain a selection of administrative and project files. Folders 1-20 consist of administrative files including by-laws, past and present membership lists, consensus statements, materials on the history of the Springfield organization, and examples of voters guides. Of particular interest are folders 5 (consensus), 6 (history of the organization), and 14 (local positions).

Folders 21-44 illustrate the major concerns of the local League, arranged alphabetically by subject. Individual folders may contain correspondence, notes, newspaper clippings, research reports, and study guides on diverse political, social, and environmental issues such as child care, charter government, home rule, education, law enforcement, parks, planning and zoning, community sustainability, local taxation, and water resources. Issues that have been extensively studied over the years by the League, such as charter government, education, and water resources, are represented by packets containing study materials spanning a number of years. The original organization of the files has been maintained. Many of the files are arranged in reverse chronological order.

The League of Women Voters of Southwest Missouri maintains other files at the headquarters in Springfield that have not been microfilmed. The files there include papers and publications generated by the state and national League of Women Voters.

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