First Annual Report

ENERGY CONSERVATION PROJECT
League of Women Voters of Ohio

by

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INTRODUCTION

LWVUS has declared greenhouse gasses to be air pollutants which should be reduced. There are two general ways of doing so. The Energy Conservation Project organizers have chosen to concentrate on conservation, since Ohio has many effective advocates for the other part of the solution - alternative energy. This choice provides the League the opportunity for making an impact, while leaving us the option to support efforts to expand usage of alternative energy.

During the past year League members have interviewed local authorities on energy conservation. This report summarizes the results of those interviews and provides recommendations for further action by the League. The project is continuing and instructions on participation are given in the 'Recommendations for Action' section, below. You can find details of our methods in Appendix A.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Everybody is doing something about conserving energy. A few of the authorities had done an energy audit, i.e. a thorough examination of equipment and procedures, a listing of improvements, and a cost/benefit analysis. More frequent were monitoring of utility bills and evaluation and execution of individual projects. There was scarcely any mention of long-term goals, such as a target date for reducing energy usage by a fixed percentage,

such as the Governor has mandated for State Government.

Although AMP Ohio (municipal power companies) provides considerable amounts of alternative electrical energy, the municipal authorities that League members interviewed, which are served by private utilities, have installed virtually no alternative power sources.

All respondents mentioned networking as a good source of ideas and most had obtained information from professional societies. However, there was little evidence of cross-fertilization (city government, schools, and libraries in the same community exchanging ideas). Even so, it appears that lack of knowledge is not the major hindrance to energy conservation.

Tight budgets and higher priorities appear to be the real barriers. Experience in California suggests that a serious effort on energy conservation requires a local champion - someone sufficiently driven and sufficiently high in the organization to effect change. The interviews that I conducted personally tended to confirm this analysis.

In several places efforts are being made to encourage energy conservation by citizens. Most cities offer recycling (with varied success). Most, if not all, libraries have book sales, which recycle discarded items. Some cities either give or lend tools or equipment to residents. And many schools include energy education in the curriculum.

A summary of the approaches to energy conservation reported to us are given in Appendix B.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Individual Members

Learn Conservation Participating in the LWVO survey is a simple way of finding out how your local governmental authorities are saving energy. Instructions and questionnaires are on our web site: http://www.lwvohio.org/Advocacy/advocacy.htm.

Save Energy These web sites offer practical advice:

Fifty-one ideas for home and community:

www.time.com/time/specials/2007/environment/

Make your workplace green:

http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/solutions/greenoffice.php

Local Leagues

Organize an Energy-Conservation Meeting Two local leagues have held energy meetings, where members report on their survey reports. This is an excellent way to educate our membership on progress and challenges in this area.

Advocacy Hopefully, the reports presented at the meeting will provide ideas for advocacy. Here are some other ideas:

1. The survey found little evidence that local authorities are coordinating with others in the same community. Formation of local energy committees would be extremely helpful.

2. There was little evidence of long-term planning. Everyone needs to develop goals and check frequently on their progress. Since many respondents mentioned monitoring energy bills, this evaluation should be routine.

3. Churches have some of the same energy problems as other public buildings and have become active. See "Ohio Interfaith Power and Light" for activities in your community. http://www.ohipl.blogspot.com/

State League

Energy Audits There is clearly a need for local governmental authorities to obtain impartial, expert advice inexpensively. Project participants will develop a plan to request that the State government adopt this function by hiring people who will proactively provide such services.

School Energy Conservation Projects The "264" Program of the Ohio School Facilities Commission provides loans for energy-saving projects. However, project interviewers received several adverse comments on the program. Project organizers will attempt to clarify the objections with an aim to recommending reforms. Legislation will probably be required.

State Purchasing Two responses (a township and a village) said that they were required to use State Purchasing and that the prices were too high and choices of energy-saving equipment were too limited. The project organizers will check these assertions, although there may be little that we can do.

Involvement The project organizers will develop plans to 'sell' the program to local Leagues.

APPENDIX A: HOW THE SURVEY WAS DONE

The background information and survey forms are posted on the LWVO web site http://lwvohio.org/Advocacy/advocacy.htm. Thirty replies were received from a variety of local authorities in 14 Counties (see list in Table 1). These were not sufficient to do a statistical analysis, particularly since the respondents were more likely to be those active in energy conservation. Therefore this report concentrates on general trends. Guides to best practice have been posted on the LWVO website under the headings *Green Cities and Counties, Green Libraries,* and *Green Schools*.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the following members who performed the surveys: Trish Bishop (Delaware), Jean Byrd (Metro Columbus), Karen Chapman (Delaware), Peggy Cohn (Athens), Janet & Gary DeLong (Bowling Green), Alice Green (North Portage County), Joyce Kepke (Bowling Green), and Adelaide Morse (Perrysburg)

Table 1. Distribution of Interviews *	
Counties	3
Countywide Authorities	3
Cities	6
Villages	1
Townships	1
Schools	11
Libraries	5
Total	30
Background Interviews	16**

* Respondents came from the following counties: Athens, Cuyahoga, Darke, Delaware, Erie, Franklin, Greene, Henry, Lake, Licking, Meigs, Portage, Trumbull, Wood

** Various organizations that were either out of the scope of the project or where the questionnaire was not used.

APPENDIX B: SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Buildings

Temperature control is probably the major source of energy consumption. Respondents approached the problem in three ways:

1. Using green practices in new construction and remodeling, including better insulation and energy-saving windows. The LEED program of the U.S. Green Building Council is the gold standard in this area.

2. Purchasing more efficient equipment, particularly furnaces and air conditioners. Guidance comes from the Energy Star program of U.S. Department of Energy.

3. Controlling temperature better. Many mentions were made of warmer indoor temperatures in summer and cooler in winter. Another tactic is to moderate temperature in individual rooms, particularly those not in use temporarily.

Lighting

Technological improvements in lighting have provided a means of saving both energy and costs.

1. Many respondents are installing compact fluorescent lights (CFL) indoors. There were several reports of shutting down lights in rooms not in use, either automatically or manually. Also, some authorities have added equipment to limit the power supply automatically.

2. Traffic lights are being replaced by light-emitting diodes (LED), which have both very low power consumption and very long life. A side benefit is reducing the frequency of expensive traffic-light replacement.

3. Some mention was also made of using low-energy bulbs and adopting solar power for outdoor lighting.

Equipment

Many respondents use following two simple procedures:

1. Replace obsolete or worn-out equipment with low-energy products.

2. Turn off equipment not in use.

Transportation and Service Vehicles

Since the survey was taken during a time of rapidly-rising fuel costs, some of the respondents may have changed their positions.

The most innovative idea that we found was schools using computers to minimize the lengths of bus routes. Mention was made of higher-mileage police cars, adoption of motorcycles, and use of electric cars for patrolling parking meters, although there is some resistance to adopting lower-performance vehicles. Travel restrictions and rules on limiting idling were also mentioned. While biofuels are being used sparingly, no one considered adopting hybrid vehicles.

Only one respondent mentioned energy-saving equipment on trash and recycling vehicles.

Recycling

In addition to curbside recycling, many public buildings provide receptacles for recycling by staff. One library designs projects to use recyclable materials.

There were also mentions of buying recycled paper and of finding uses for discarded tires and asphalt. Several mentions were made of employing used motor oil as a heating fuel (which is environmentally bad).