

Reflections on State House Day

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Here are a few thoughts on Statehouse Day 2016:

Our trip from Toledo took more than the 2 1/2 hrs we thought it would, so we reached the hotel meeting room at the tail end of the first presentation. But I heard a basic summary of the importance of judicial reform: ballots must be non-partisan; judges should be mandated to recuse themselves from cases in which they've some vested interest and/or monetary connection.

We were pleased to have a break thereafter and enjoy fruit and coffee--healthy snacks!

The presentation on school funding was thorough. I was impressed by the audio system in the room and the way most speakers took pains to be sure every attendee could hear them. What stood out for me were some final words on the subject: "More money doesn't assure excellent results [in learning]. But poverty often equals poor school outcomes."

Lunch was delicious, and we enjoyed talking with other League members at the table. I wish we'd have had a legislator or two with us, with whom we could have discussed some of the morning's issues.

The luncheon speaker was from the NYU School of Law . He said that gerrymandering is basically a way for the powerful to punish voters for taking political actions which the powerful dislike.

My husband and I had to leave the hotel, for the LWVO had kindly arranged for us to meet with our state senator, Randy Gardner. Because he was in caucus, we met with his senior aide Shelby Hartley. She was a fine listener. I told her I was a member of both the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women, and I wanted to outline three of both our organizations' concerns so that she could pass them on to Senator Gardner.

Regarding the environment--particularly our still vital river and lake--I thanked the Senator for his good work . Similarly, I said we were grateful for his voting to make charter schools more accountable. But I strenuously objected to his voting to defund Planned Parenthood. Both my husband and I have served on the Board of PPNWO and are well aware of the thousands of women and men each clinic serves annually. The lawmakers of Ohio actually seem bent on taking away women's reproductive health rights.

Because of our lunch conversation, I brought up a fourth concern for Shelby: the "Guns Everywhere" bill. She looked on her computer, but said she couldn't find information on it, so I said I would send her some literature. She thanked us for stopping in, and we thanked her for listening to us. On the whole, I was grateful for her time and her pleasant demeanor, but I did feel she skirted the Planned Parenthood issue.

We returned to the hotel in time for the gun violence presentation--perfect timing! I learned that, on average, three people are killed daily in gun violence in Ohio.

In my thank-you letter to Ms. Hartley, I included an informational sheet from the day's last session on the epidemic of mass shootings: House Bill 48, the "Guns Everywhere" bill. I have not heard back from her, but I am pleased that she asked me for that information on guns and that she also requested one of my copies of LWV's public policy priorities.