

LWV Duluth and the Roarin 20s

LWV Duluth archive shows that the St. Louis County Suffrage Association led to the Eighth District League of Women Voters organized on April 27, 1920. Mrs. C.C. Colton was the first chairman. A temporary organization was formed in Duluth in 1921 and in January 1922, the Duluth League was organized with Mrs. H. J. Grannis as president. Soon after its organization, the LWV Duluth held the first Institute of Government ever conducted in northern Minnesota. Lecture courses on practical citizenship and classes in government were held in cooperation with the Taxpayers' League. The League members hosted teas and luncheons for members and other guests interested in the League.

Meeting minutes are archived beginning on August 20, 1924. The highlights from the 1920s include the following LWV Duluth activities and policy studies undertaken:

1924 and 1925:

- worked with churches and the Duluth PTA to provide schools for voters
- held discussions to get women interested in politics
- studied the various departments of local government information
- furnished information regarding the World Court to every organized group of women in Duluth and provided a World Court exhibit at Glass Block
- held round table talks regarding city affairs, election methods, and ballot marking procedures
- held voter registration booths at local business resulting in 645 registrations
- assisted with "Get Out the Vote" efforts with public and private businesses stamping outgoing bills with "Vote Nov. 4"; results showed that 79% of St. Louis County voted, an increase of 31% over the 1920 vote.

1926 and 1927:

- passed a new constitution and bylaws
- hosted Miss Bessie Johnson, a Duluth Public Schools worker in the Americanization process. Her talk was titled "A Helping Hand" and 2 members of the Americanization class of Irving School "told some of their impressions of America in a most interesting manner." League members spoke on WEBC radio about Americanization.
- held candidate meetings, classes in citizenship to train volunteer teachers for citizen schools, hosted banquets for new citizens, and created a display in the Glass Block featuring an "ignorant voter as against an informed one."
- held discussions including the regulation of billboards, taxation, the Child Labor Amendment, party caucuses, and efficiency in government with a committee formed to consider a change in Duluth city government. The LWV Duluth passed a resolution in support of a council-manager form of government for the City of Duluth.
- wrote to MN Senators to support the World Court and to eliminate federal "lame duck" government

- held a “most interesting talk” on the origin and work of the Raleigh Street House “whose inhabitants...are mostly Southern European.”
- Hotel Duluth and the Spalding Hotel vied for hosting the League meetings with Hotel Duluth prevailing.

1928 and 1929

- studied the new form of city government, the state ballot counting system, “general political machinery in the State Capitol”, and international treaties
- held a Voter’s School at the Lincoln Library and set up a headquarters in Glass Block for the purpose of giving out information regarding the upcoming election.
- hosted a luncheon for over 200 featuring speaker Pierre Lemux who spoke on “Modern Manners in Foreign Policies”
- studied wages and hours of the working women of Minnesota, state laws and customs relating to marriage, and welfare of Minnesota children.
- dues were increased from \$1 to \$2 per year

The League didn’t just work however! A July, 1926 issue of *Minnesota Woman Voter* focused on the Duluth chapter and states: “That an active interest in the political education of women does not interfere with one’s ability to enjoy the gayer things of life was demonstrated at the large dancing party which the League gave ...which nearly five hundred people attended.” Interspersed throughout the minutes of the 1920s are references to numerous card parties, luncheons, teas and rummage sales.

In addition to the meeting minutes, there are LWV Duluth scrapbooks, beginning in 192, in the UMD archive filled with newspaper articles from the *Duluth News-Tribune* and *Duluth Herald*. Notable 1929 news included that the LWV Duluth membership committee named head of a “new department to extend the league to more remote parts of the city and build up groups for study and discussion.” Programs included “The Disillusioned Voter,” “Are Women Needed in the Legislature,” “The Public Purse,” the Geneva Convention, the World Court and the League of Nations. Noted was that “...the league offers material for adult minds and it is constantly accumulating authoritative facts.”

A *Duluth Herald* editorial noted that 14 counties in MN had not allowed women to serve on juries despite the 1919 law allowing women to serve. “The LWV does not intend to let the matter rest...Evidently, **the women mean business**, and it is this newspaper's opinion that officials of the offending counties will be showing good judgement by recognizing the writing on the wall, and getting the women on the jury lists as soon as possible.”

Yes, indeed, “the women [still] mean business!