

VOTE SMART...democracy in action.

I have been a member of the LWV for six years, joining when I relocated to the Albany (NY) area from CT. Since my retirement in 2005, I have adopted a unique lifestyle which allows me to volunteer at organizations that offer free room and board in exchange for workplace skills. I enjoy sharing skills accumulated during my career in education and healthcare, that's why I manage the membership database for our local LWV - I can do it remotely. It was while discussing my lifestyle with fellow member Francine Frank, that she suggested I look into Vote Smart. This organization, Francine said, provides access to accurate and relevant information about our democratic system of government.

Earlier this year, aware that I would volunteer at the Heifer Ranch (Perryville, AR), a learning center of [Heifer International](#) (Little Rock), I thought it would be fun to combine a trip to the "midwest rectangle" i.e. Badlands, SD, to Yellowstone to Devil's Tower, on the way to Vote Smart in Philipsburg, MT. [Vote Smart](#), a research retreat on the Idaho border, relies on volunteers, interns, plus a small staff to work on an extensive database containing the names/background data of every politician in the United States. The staff resides in-town, interns (who sign on for six months) and volunteers (two-week stints) stay at The Great Divide Ranch on Moose Lake. Like many volunteer sites, those staying at the ranch share free housing and are asked to contribute \$45 a week for food. Yes, we did see moose!

[Vote Smart](#) is a comprehensive and reliable source of nonpartisan information for voters. The Great Divide Ranch is extraordinary people in an extraordinary place, compiling data on EVERY political candidate in the U.S. for your perusal. Vote Smart partners with the League of Women Voters and election officials of various states and local communities throughout the U.S. While volunteering, I managed to update names/locations of Registrar of Voters, starting at Alabama getting through Maryland. Boring data entry, yes. Important, yes. But, other than working 8-5, M/F, evenings and weekends were mine to explore area sapphire mines, hike the trails on the ranch, canoe on Moose Lake, and interact with an energetic group of informed individuals, passionate about our democratic way of life. You can investigate how to volunteer by accessing the website: www.VoteSmart.org.

In September, 2014, a updated Vote Smart website was unveiled offering a political universe of your right to truth: I Spy, Galaxy, and VoteEasy offer innovative, useful and important tools for self-government. Your LWV has always been a resource with [Vote 411](#). Both organizations advocate for education and transparency. We, as Americans, are fortunate to have many options to become aware, get involved, and encourage others to *get out and give back*. Remember, as the League advocates: "Democracy is NOT a spectacular sport!"

Barbara M Traynor, author of [Second Career Volunteer](#), a passionate, pennywise approach to a unique lifestyle, resides in Slingerlands when not volunteering around the U.S.