

Summary of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - Conference of the Parties 23 (COP23)

The climate conference, COP23 was held from Nov. 5th to 17th in Bonn, Germany. Among the 25,000 attendees from 197 countries were ten League of Women Voters members: Michele and Tony Dorsey, Phoenix AZ; Sarah Diefendorf and Eliane McCarty, Oakland CA; Adrienne Kaltman, Lee County FL; Claudia Keith, OR; Yvonne Flores, Las Cruces NM; Peggy Schultz, New Castle County DE; Rebecca Boyd, Wilmette IL; and Robin Tokmakian, Monterey CA. Because of UN limitations, half the group attended the first week and half the second week. This is a compilation of our experiences. Individual insights can be found on the [LWV UN Climate blog](#).

The Climate Summit had two separate venues. The first, located in and around the UN's Bonn buildings, hosted the official COP23 negotiations. Access was limited to official delegates and LWV was allowed 3 delegates each week. The second venue included side events hosted by one or more countries (the parties to the convention) or NGOs. Unlike COP15, which LWV also attended, the two venues were separated by 2 kilometers. Travel between the two was by bike, foot, or electric shuttle. While a few demonstrations were held in the first venue (one member participated in the Gender Action Plan demonstration), most demonstrations were either outside or in the second venue. Negotiators could easily avoid interaction with the most vocal of the demonstrations.

Official Negotiations: Contributing to the UN negotiations is difficult. The LWV is a member of the environmental constituency of NGOs and also participated in the Women and Gender constituency. It is through these constituencies that interventions (statements) are made, when allowed, to the formal negotiation process. As the LWV has only recently become actively involved in the UN climate arena, most of our participation came in the form of learning how the process worked. While the negotiators struggled to come to agreement on how and when to take stock of carbon emissions and financial commitments, the parties did agree to a [Gender Action Plan](#) that considers the effect of climate on women (80% of the victims of the 2007 Bangladesh cyclone were women) along with greater gender balance in climate change decision making, gender-responsiveness, increased workshops and technical assistance for women. The official US State Department delegation, with the highest ranking delegate being the Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, was fairly quiet during negotiations and optimistically spoke about the US's engagement in climate negotiations in its final [official statement](#).

Side Events: The second venue provided the LWV delegates with many, many opportunities to learn about what the rest of the world was doing to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. Such events included panels discussing everything from reducing carbon emissions in the shipping industry, how women and Indigenous people are affected by climate change (a whole day was dedicated to gender issues), to a workshop on "Using Decision-Making Tools and Climate Education to Build Momentum on Climate Change". One member attended the "Child Rights, Climate Change and Climate Action" discussion which paralleled the LWV's support of the Children's Trust Lawsuit, but on a global scale. Some of the events formally

announced various countries' initiatives, including the creation of the Oceans Pathway Partnership (Fiji) and the launching of the "[Powering Past Coal Alliance](#)" led by the UK and Canada with more than 20 countries and regional governments joining (including WA and OR).

US Government/s Participation: Besides the US State Department's participation in the official negotiations, entities from official US governments (federal and regional) promoted their views on climate change. The federal government, unlike the previous 22 years, did not have an official pavilion to highlight its efforts to reduce climate change. However, regional and local governments, along with US businesses, had the US Climate Center ([#we are still in](#)) to highlight non-federal efforts. Speakers at this unofficial US pavilion included various governors (including the two Browns from CA and OR), Al Gore, and businesses such as Walmart and Mars. It became the hub for American activism and American denial of current White House policies on Climate Change. This was in contrast to one of the most highly anticipated events, a Whitehouse organized event. The event, entitled "The Role of Cleaner and More Efficient Fossil Fuels and Nuclear Power in Climate Mitigation" included speakers from Peabody Energy and NuScale Power and someone from the Obama administration for "balance". A long line outside the room (holding only 150 or so) included many who wanted to protest or hear what proved to be a controversial discussion. Initially, a large group of young people managed to get in the room, but as soon as the US President's representative began to speak, they walked out and proceeded to have a sit down protest for about 20 minutes, blocking anyone else's entry into the room. Towards the end of the session, several LWV delegates entered the room to hear the Q/A session. One of the most interesting questions was asked by a young female Chinese journalist: "why did the President think climate change was a Chinese hoax". The Whitehouse responded by saying the quote was taken out of context.

Summary: While discouraged by how the official US was addressing climate change, we came away energized knowing that many countries and very vocal young people are pushing for strong actions to address the problem. Unfortunately it is proving to be a very, very slow path. As one of the speakers, Agnes Leina Ntikaampi of Kenya (speaking on behalf of indigenous communities) decried: "How long will we continue planning and meeting? We need to act to save the people. Every minute we spend talking, someone is dying on the ground from climate change issues. People live with climate change effects all their lives, including drought, starvation, and flooding. People are dying while we are busy planning."