



Calendar 2010

January

-12. Tues. 4:15 PM Environmental Meeting, Arcedium Coffee Shop, St. Charles. For more information contact environmental@lwvgenstc.org

-14. Thurs. TLC. 6:45-8:15, Arcedium Coffee House, St. Charles. Please bring a copy of Public Policy Positions included in this Voter, p. 5

-18, Mon. 7:00 PM Congressional Forum for Federal District 14 and State Offices for Senatorial District 25 and Representative District 50. Norris Center, St. Charles. Co-sponsored LWV Elgin Area, Geneva/St. Charles and Batavia.. see p. 2

-22. Fri. Merger Meeting. 4:00 PM

-25. Mon. Presentation on Batavia Bridge report. 7-9 PM. Batavia Public Library.

February

-2. Tues. Primary Election. **VOTE!**

-6. Sat. LWVIL Issues Briefing, University Center, Chicago. For information on attending see LWVIL website or contact president@lwvgenstc.org.

-14. 90th Anniversary Founding of League of Women Voters in Chicago.

-20. Environmental Conference in Batavia. More information to follow.

-22. Mon. 7-9 PM. History of Batavia LWV. Batavia Public Library.

Upcoming

March 22, 2010. 7-9 PM. Batavia Public Library. Environmental

June 11-14 2010. LWVUS Convention, Atlanta, GA

President's Letter

Valentine's Day displays are in the store. This Valentine's Day has special significance for the League of Women Voters. We are celebrating League's 90th year since its founding in Chicago, February 14, 1920. This year we will be "founding" a new, stronger local league as we move forward on the merger with LWV Batavia.

LWV of Illinois is working on a 90th celebration in the Capitol Rotunda in Springfield in March on Lobby Day, complete with birthday cake. Not to miss an opportunity, Redistricting petitions will be circulated. See accompanying article on IL Fair Map for how you can be involved.

The February 2 Primary Election is almost upon us. Amazingly, this first week after New Year's a Candidates forum was held in Batavia. See Voter Service report for details on the forum January 18 and our new online Voter's Guide.

At the new state legislative session, LWVIL is targeting a number of issues. In addition to Redistricting, you may receive Calls to Action on the Abolition of the Death Penalty (HB 262) and on the Tax Reform (Responsible Budget Coalition). The Legislative Briefing on February 6 is an excellent way to get up to speed on issues. Please contact one of us if you are interested in attending.

Health Care Reform is in final deliberations. The LWVUS web site, www.lwv.org has a convenient way to contact Senators and Representatives.

Our calendar is full with committee meetings and special events. Committees welcome new members. Join us at TLC (Thoughtful, Lively Conversation) January 14, 6:45 p.m. at the Arcedium Coffeehouse in St. Charles. (see page 5)

A Happy, Healthy, Fulfilling NEW YEAR!

Janet Craft, Co-President, president@lwvgenstc.org

Please Join Us

\$60 one-year **Individual Membership**

\$90 one-year **Household Membership** for two members who share an address

\$25 one-year **Student Membership**

Make check out to: League of Women Voters of Geneva/St. Charles.

Send to: PO Box 824, St. Charles, IL 60175. Or pay with Pay Pal

Go to our website: <http://www.lwvgenstc.org/join.html>

Go to the bottom of the page and click the amount you wish to pay. This is for both new and renewal memberships. You do not need to have a Pay Pal account in order to utilize Pay Pal.

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Happy 90th Birthday League of Women Voters!!

From: The League of Women Voters Through the Decades

Compiled by Kay Maxwell, 16th President of the League of Women Voters, U.S.

From the spirit of the suffrage movement and the shock of the First World War came a great idea - that a nonpartisan civic organization could provide the education and experience the public needed to assure the success of democracy. The League of Women Voters was founded on that idea. In her address to the National American Woman Suffrage Association's (NAWSA) 50th convention in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1919, President Carrie Chapman Catt proposed the creation of a league of women voters to "finish the fight" and aid in the reconstruction of the nation. And so a League of Women Voters was formed within NAWSA, composed of the organizations in the states where woman suffrage had already been attained. The next year, on February 14, 1920, six months before the 19th amendment to the Constitution was ratified, the League was formally organized in Chicago as the National League of Women Voters. Catt described the purpose of the new organization:

"The League of Women Voters is not to dissolve any present organization but to unite all existing organizations of women who believe in its principles. It is not to lure women from partisanship but to combine them in an effort for legislation which will protect coming movements, which we cannot even foretell, from suffering the untoward conditions which have hindered for so long the coming of equal suffrage. Are the women of the United States big enough to see their opportunity?"

Maud Wood Park became the first national president of the League. From the beginning, however, it was apparent that the legislative goals of the League would not be exclusively focused on women's issues and that education aimed at all of the electorate was in order. For almost 90 years, the League has helped millions of women and men become informed participants in government.

It wasn't until the 1946 convention that the name was changed to the League of Women Voters of the United States to emphasize the shift from being a federation of state Leagues to being a member-based organization.

As you probably know, the United States is conducting the census during 2010. The League has been selected as the lead agency for the Complete Count here in Illinois. Board member Chris Pakan has investigated what we might be able to do in central Kane County. Chris reports that Kane County has recently formed a Complete Count Committee. Its focus will be on support of the Elgin and Aurora committees where the largest hard-to-count populations reside. We will be contacting our local access station, BATV, to determine if we could prepare a brief promo that could be broadcast locally. Brochures about the census will be available at the January 18 forum.

2010 Census: Striving for a "Complete Count" in Illinois

Census questionnaires will go out in March, 2010. Population figures compiled by the census every ten years help determine the distribution of federal funds and the setting of political boundaries.

It is especially important to get the word out in Illinois' often undercounted poor and minority residents. In 2000, only 55 percent of Chicagoans mailed in their forms—one of the worst return rates among the nation's major cities.

For every person in Illinois who does not send their census questionnaire back, the state misses out on hundreds of dollars per year. The Brookings Institution puts that figure at \$12,000 per person over the next ten years.

The League of Women Voters of Illinois is pleased to announce that they have been selected by Governor Quinn as the lead agency for Illinois' Complete Count Committee: "Everybody In. No one Left Out!" for Census 2010.

The League will collaborate with the Governor's office to help select Complete County Committee members from non-profit organizations, business community, faith-based organizations, and the media. Working with these organizations and local Leagues from around the state, the LWVIL will help ensure that Illinois is fully counted.

Voter Service Report

The new early primary date (February 2) has kept the Voter Service Committee busy – trying to jumpstart the election season in the midst of holiday time. A forum for contested candidates for Kane County Sheriff, Kane County Treasurer, and local Kane County Board seats was held on January 5 in conjunction with the Batavia League. It is now being regularly shown on our local public service station (channel 10). Another forum on January 18 at the Norris Cultural Arts Center at 7 pm will feature the two Republican candidates for the 14th Congressional District as well as contested candidates for Illinois Senate District 25 and Illinois Representative District 50. This forum is co-sponsored with the Batavia and Elgin Leagues. It will also include a media panel.

In addition to the forums, Martha Ryan, with help from Jean Pierce and Darlene Bakk, has put together an online voter's guide on our website (www.lwvgenstc.org). Although not all candidates responded, it contains helpful information for voters.

Mary Ann Naas, with help from Martha Ryan and Patti Lackman of Batavia LWV, provided voter registration and e-slate training for an AID group (Association for Individual Development) on January 5. Mary Ann expressed satisfaction with the effort and commented, "They really felt special and we gave each one a lapel flag pin."

The Voter Service Committee will also be organizing Election Day assistance for the Kane County Clerk's office. This activity is both a service to a smooth running election and a fundraiser for the League. It involves driving to polling sites to pick up provisional ballots on Election Day and takes about 2 to 3 hours. If anyone would like to help with this project, please contact Janet Safanda at voterservice@lwvgenstc.org

Many thanks to all who help with these events, especially to Patti Lackman for tons of organizational help and to Barbara King for moderating at the Jan. 5 forum.

Holiday Fundraiser a Success!

Members and guests of the Leagues of Women Voters of Batavia and Geneva/St. Charles jointly participated in a holiday fundraiser on December 7, 2009 at Enticing Cuisine in downtown Batavia.

Members and guests were treated to delicious hors d'oeuvres and wine by candlelight. It was not only a delightful way to begin the holiday season, but contributions were made to the Education Funds of the League to continue our ongoing mission of educating voters.

For questions or comments about this issue of the Voter, please contact editor@lwvgenstc.org

Welcome new Member:

Nan Wroldsen of Geneva

Antidote to Corruption: Citizen Initiative on Redistricting

Redistricting reform is currently in the hands of the legislature that has shown itself unable to change a patently partisan process. There are two ways to change the system – through the legislature or through the citizens.

A Citizen Initiative on Redistricting was formed with LWVIL and other reform groups. The goal is to obtain the required 500,000 signatures of registered voters in favor of a Fair Map Amendment by April 1, 2010. LWV Geneva-St. Charles will be part of a statewide effort to collect signatures on petitions, educate citizens and promote the proposed amendment to our members and communities.

We will work through our members and their various networks to get the word out and petitions signed. More info on www.ilfairmap.com

Environment Committee

The next Environmental meeting will be Tues., Jan. 12 at 4:15 at the Arcadium Coffee House in St. Charles. We will continue discussion of David MacKay's Sustainable Energy Without all the Hot Air. (<http://www.withouthotair.com/download.html>)

We continue to look for ideas to involve the three main towns in our area (Geneva, St. Charles and Batavia) in developing a positive approach towards energy conservation. To that end, we will look for venues at which we can present our insulation demonstration as an avenue to discuss practical and (relatively) inexpensive ways to promote energy conservation.

Jim Kirkoff has contacted us about co-sponsoring the second Conference on Energy, Environment and Conservation in Batavia. We will be a co-sponsor of this event on February 20. More information will be forthcoming.

Although we have sent this to you previously, we are putting it in this issue of the Voter as it is an important, timely and well-written testimony by member and LWVIL Mental Health Issues Specialist Darlene Bakk.

Testimony regarding Nursing Home Safety written by Darlene Bakk for LWVIL

From: League of Women Voters of Illinois
Nancy Marcus, President
Darlene Bakk, Mental Health Issue Specialist
Eileen Subak, Criminal Justice Issue Specialist

Re: Testimony

The League welcomes the opportunity to make comments on nursing home safety regarding persons with mental illness. The League is nonpartisan and a multi-issued organization committed to open, responsive government, brought about through informed, involved citizens.

The League has a position based on a study on institutional and community programs for persons with serious mental illness it undertook in 1986. The major conclusion of the Mental Health Task Force was: "The mental health system in Illinois is not a system at all. It is a patchwork of state facilities and local programs varying in quality. People with serious mental illnesses have great difficulty in getting needed services because of the nature of their illness, the lack of resources and poor coordination of services."

The League also has a position on criminal justice based on a study conducted in the early 1970s. In part the findings demonstrated support for expansion of prevention and treatment programs in order to ease the burden on the criminal justice system. It also supports that it is essential that there be funding for specialized programs for offender, such as mental health services, programs for female offenders and substance abuse treatment. The League's 1989 publication, "A Profile of Community Services for the Mentally Ill in Illinois," found that housing is the greatest need because of the shortage of critical residential programs which were "seldom or never available" in their local communities. Families with relatives with serious mental illness expressed that affordable housing was the single most urgent need. It also found that nursing homes acted as housing substitutes with an estimated 12,000 mentally ill persons residing in nursing homes according to the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. According to recent numbers the number rose to currently 14,258 from 1998's numbers of 11,808.

Yet decades later, there has been little change from the State to correct and move forward on recommendations and initiatives suggested by the League and other organizations interested in the well-being of these populations. Instead, conditions may have deteriorated. Not only are there fewer state hospital beds but an increasing number of offenders with mental health needs can be found in our court systems and in our juvenile and adult correctional facilities.

The League is supporting the creation of mental health courts and is actively working with others to address the needs of youth and adults who are returning to the community.

Whether one has a diagnosis of mental illness and/or has a past criminal background and resides in a nursing home, safety can be enhanced while improving the lives of those who are placed in those environments by the following actions:

- Provide adequate funding and monitoring of nursing home programs.
- Enforce the mental health code
- Honor and respect individual rights
- Provide humane conditions
- Ensure quality mental health services and other pertinent programs targeted at those living within facilities are readily available, and where applicable are also assist and place persons in community settings with decent, accessible housing options and quality support service
- Provide better screening techniques

LWVUS PROGRAM PLANNING

The National Convention of the League of Women Voters of the U.S. will meet in Atlanta June 11-15. As part of League's grassroots orientation, Local and State leagues participate in the program planning process for Convention. By March 1 Local, State Leagues and ILO's (Inter League Organizations) can propose one new study, one review or concurrence, or to make no recommendation. The process has been streamlined from prior years when Leagues were asked to adopt the lengthy existing program.

At the next TLC (Thoughtful, Lively Conversation), on Thursday, 1/14, (see calendar), we will review the current policy positions so that we can answer the question. "Are LWV National Policy Positions current?"

Public Policy Positions 2008-2010

Representative Government: Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote. Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation. Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

Election Process

Apportionment. Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

Campaign Finance. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

Selection of the President. Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct-popular-vote and work to abolish the Electoral College. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.

Citizen Rights

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation. Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision making.

Individual Liberties. Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.

Public Policy on Reproductive Choices. Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Congress and the Presidency

Congress. Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision-making capability, and effective performance.

The Presidency. Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

International Relations: Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

United Nations: Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.

Trade: Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries: Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

Arms Control: Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

Military Policy and Defense Spending: Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

Natural Resources: Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

Natural Resources: Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

Resource Management: Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control: Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

Air Quality. Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

Energy. Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

Land Use. Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.

Water Resources. Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

Waste Management. Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

Nuclear Issues. Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

Public Participation: Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

Agriculture Policy: Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

Social Policy: Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

Equality of Opportunity

Equal Rights. Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA. **Education, Employment and Housing.** Support equal access to education, employment and housing.

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Fiscal Policy

Tax Policy. Support adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that relies primarily on a broad-based income tax.

Federal Deficit. Promote responsible deficit policies. Funding of Entitlements. Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

Health Care: Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.

Immigration: Promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas. Ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

Meeting Basic Human Needs: Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Income Assistance. Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.

Support Services. Provide for essential support services.

Housing Supply. Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

Child Care: Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.

Early Intervention for Children at Risk: Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.

Violence Prevention: Support violence prevention programs in communities.

Gun Control: Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

Urban Policy: Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

Death Penalty: The LWVUS supports the abolition of the death penalty.