

# **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

## **LWVIL Issues Briefing, February 6, 2010**

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The issues highlighted at the 2007 Issues Briefing by panelists from Chicago Metropolis 2020, Safer Foundation, TASC, Mental Health Summit and Loyola University are just as relevant today: An overreliance on incarceration for non-violent drug offenses, prisons that are de facto mental hospitals and the growing need for reentry services to prevent offenders from returning to prison.

[www.chicagometropolis2020.org/documents/2006CrimeandJusticeIndex.pdf](http://www.chicagometropolis2020.org/documents/2006CrimeandJusticeIndex.pdf) - The Crime and Justice Index.

During the past three years the LWVIL has supported the revision of criminal laws, community interventions for the mentally ill and substance abusers and initiatives to remove barriers to employment for offenders with criminal records. During 2009 the League participated in Collaborative on Reentry efforts to impact criminal justice policies and systems. Here are issues the League plans to address in 2010:

#### **Access to Interventions**

- Monitor mental health and drug courts. Illinois is the first state to organize a mental health court association, which reflects the growing support for serving offenders in the community. The League will ask if essential services are available.
- Examine current options and review best practices in other states.

#### **Incarceration and Reentry**

- Support inmate education and training; restore Pell grants.
- Enhance hiring opportunities and remove barriers to employment for persons with criminal records.
- Address the housing supply and the role of the community.

#### **Funding**

- Some relief has come in the form of federal grants. These are not expected to continue indefinitely, which means the state must continue its struggle to maintain essential services.

#### **The LWVIL Plans to Monitor**

- Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council. PA 96-0711.
- Impact of Illinois drug laws on minorities PA 95-0995.
- Crime Reduction Act [similar to Redeploy Illinois for juveniles] which will award federal funds for the diversion of non-violent offenders. PA 96-0761. The League will monitor funding for probation services.

#### **For more information**

- See [www.lwvil.org/criminaljustice.asp/](http://www.lwvil.org/criminaljustice.asp/)
- Consider signing up to serve as a Grass Roots Advocate.
- Questions? Suggestions? Please email Eileen Subak [issues@lwvil.org](mailto:issues@lwvil.org)