

Social Policy Issues
LWVIL Issues Briefing, February 5, 2011
Jan Kay, Issues Specialist

I. Met with Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law project w/Karen Harris regarding:

- legislation to be introduced in upcoming General Assembly
- spoke with Karen via phone in December to give her possible views, concerns, advice and potential support for the proposals.

1. Children's Savings Account Act which would provide a savings account for every child at birth seeded with an initial gov. deposit and matched savings for lower income children. A task Force in the State Treasurer's office concluded a recent study and the recommendations will be released shortly. The proposed legislation seeks to implement these recommendations. **(League will need to see the proposed leg. In order to see if the positions we have would cover such)**

2. Automatic IRA Act. Would provide retirement savings opportunities for those Americans who do not currently have an employer sponsored retirement plan. [approx. 70 M. Americans], Through direct deposits facilitated by their employer. The accounts would be opened automatically upon starting a job and there are other features to make it simple, cost effective and not burdensome on either the worker or the employer. **(We have not seen the legislation as yet and will decide our possible support after studying this.)**

I. RBC work proceeds on many levels. We participated in the conference call on Dec. 20th at which time John Bouman stressed that between now and Jan. 12th We are on "CRUNCH TIME" There has been a proposal to amend the Constitution which would limit SPENDING. This would be disastrous for RBC agenda. The Governor's proposal is for tax fairness and revenue increase. He wants RBC support for debt reduction bond after new revenue. \$15-\$16 billion bond would pay down back bills and a couple years pension obligations. We would be caught up on the bills plus have new revenue. In addition, the Governor wants an amendment to create progressive tax. But this pushes things out a couple years. RBC is concerned with immediate crisis and says we need revenue now. We need 2/3 of both Chambers thru 2012 election and it would take affect in 2013. The leaders want to sunset revenue increase in 3-4 years. Apparently a sales tax expansion is now off the leaders' proposals but ON Gov's proposals.

There has been more conversation since Jan. 3rd, I'm sure, but I have not seen any new materials as yet from RBC. **(Tax Increase passed General Assembly since this was written – RBC is still meeting to develop new strategies)**

- III. We continue to support the work of Early Learning, Voices, Oz of Prevention, etc. Pre-School for All is very high on the continuing agenda as are other pieces which connect with that issue, such as transportation to and from school as well as rehabbing the facilities of many structures for pre schoolers.
- IV. Report from IL Commission on the Elimination of Poverty is now released. It is a Very comprehensive report which is still being studied by the Issues specialist. We participated in a conference call in December around the report as well. Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights played a major role in this work.
- V. Affordable Housing is always on the radar and on our working list. Housing Action Illinois continues to be a major piece of our Social Policy work. The advocacy is divided among 4 major areas: Affordable Housing Production/Subsidies; Homeless Services; Housing Counseling/Foreclosures; Fair Housing/Tenants Rights. Some of these are State issues and some Federal. On the local front, we have worked with DuPage Housing Action Coalition which gives a very good view of the issues and needed policy.
- VI. Employment work advocacy for the League has come largely through our Membership in Chicago Jobs Council. This organization has both State and Federal policies in addition to local issues/policies. The workgroup meets on a monthly basis for updates and reports.
- VII. Transportation, namely public transportation is coming to the top these days Around the State. Too often, folks are just not aware of the issues facing individuals trying to get to work, especially in the north to south directions, and just suppose we must all have autos. We attended a public hearing in DuPage County and we were the only citizen present to speak to the issue to PACE, Metra, RTA and the County dept. However, the issue has appeared in discussions more and more and it seems as tho' the public bodies are realizing this to be a serious piece of employment and daily life. There is a resistance to public transportation in general, not only by the public, but it seems even to public bodies. The League will be paying close attention for opportunities to give public input.

Jan Kay, Social Policies Specialist
LWVIL
January 2011 Report