

LWVIL STATE GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

Constitutional Implementation and Amendments

1977, 1980, 1981, 1988, 1998 and 2003

League of Women Voters of Illinois Position:
LWVIL supports:

- Implementation of the constitutional mandate to the legislature to provide an orderly transfer process when units of government are dissolved or their structure or boundaries are changed.
- An appointed State Board of Education with authority to name the state superintendent of education.
- Flexible annual sessions of the legislature.
- A revenue article with as little restrictive detail as possible, and which does not contain limitations on tax rates or bonding power and does not prohibit any particular tax.
- A graduated income tax.
- Constitutional initiative for the legislative article.
- Compulsory referendum for constitutional amendments.
- Merit selection of judges, with provision for public financing at Supreme and Appellate Court levels.
- Recall of elected judges.

The League supports indirect statutory and constitutional initiative, a process by which citizens can petition for enactment of a law or the passage of a constitutional amendment by the legislature. If the legislature fails to act within a specified time, the proposed law or amendment is placed on the ballot at the next election. (This is in contrast to direct statutory and constitutional initiatives that bypass the legislature. After petitions have received the required number of signatures and are deemed valid, the question is placed on the ballot.)

In addition, the Illinois League opposes constitutional amendments to provide for optional, compulsory or advisory referenda for

statutes initiated by the legislature. The League supports statutory provisions requiring that those who pass and sign petitions be registered voters, and opposes requiring a representative geographical distribution of signers or petitions. (Note: In 1999, the US Supreme Court invalidated Colorado's requirement that referenda circulators be registered voters. In response to these rulings, the Illinois General Assembly changed the Illinois Election Code in 2001. Illinois law now conforms to the Federal Constitutional voting requirements that circulators be at least 18 years old and a United States citizen. (This change in the Election Code essentially voids the LWVIL position that petition passers and signers be registered voters.)

The League supports merit selection as the ideal method to appoint judges to the courts in Illinois. Since 2003, in light of a longtime League goal of limiting political influence in the selection of judges, the escalating cost of judicial races and slow progress towards the goals of merit selection, the League also has advocated working for public financing of judicial elections at the Supreme Court and Appellate Court levels.

Background:

Ratification of the 1970 Constitution was the culmination of almost 30 years of League effort to repair or replace the Constitution of 1870. Much of the credit for passage of a resolution by the General Assembly in 1967 to call a Constitutional Convention can be attributed to the work of the Constitutional Study Commission chaired by Representative Marjorie Pebworth, LWVIL President, 1961-1963.

Beginning in 1967, LWVIL embarked on an all-out campaign to convince the electorate of the need for a new constitution. The 1969 LWVIL Convention directed a study on constitutional revision. The League took on

the challenge and quickly completed in-depth studies leading to:

- Positions on the executive, legislative, apportionment, cumulative voting, amending process and suffrage.
- Position on local government.
- Reaffirmation of the 1949 judicial position, which had been the basis for modernizing the courts in 1963.

These positions, along with existing positions on education, revenue, environment and human rights, enabled the League to testify on each article of the proposed Constitution. League observers or lobbyists covered all sessions of the Constitutional Convention, and most of the committee hearings.

At a statewide meeting in 1970, the League approved the work of the Constitutional Convention. Again a successful all-out campaign was waged for ratification of the proposed constitution. LWVIL also supported two of the four separate submission items: merit selection of judges and single-member districts, neither of which passed.

Early League efforts to implement the 1970 Constitution were directed toward the Local Government Article in order to strengthen county and municipal government, encourage intergovernmental cooperation, and eliminate townships or restrict their powers. The League voted to drop the local government item from the state program in 1977 because of successes in the first two areas and because abolishing township government was unlikely since they were in the federal Revenue Sharing Program (now eliminated). Local Leagues, however, may work for the dissolution of special districts and/or the elimination of specific townships following local study.

The 1973 LWVIL Convention adopted the constitutional item to incorporate the

unfinished business of implementing and amending the Constitution.

The 1979 LWVIL Convention adopted a study of the process of public initiative, referendum and recall for Illinois. Positions reached in this study are now a part of this item.

1988: The 1987 LWVIL Convention adopted a study of the need for a Constitutional Convention with direction that it be completed in time for the League to play a role in affecting the outcome of the November 1988 referendum on the issue. Members concluded overwhelmingly that a Constitutional Convention was not needed at that time. and the LWVIL undertook a vigorous campaign to defeat the referendum. LWVIL joined Committee to Preserve the Illinois Constitution and participated extensively at both the state and local levels in urging a No vote on Con-Con. The League's efforts were successful, with voters rejecting the Constitutional Convention call by a 2-1 margin.

2008: The 2007 LWVIL Convention adopted another study of the need for a State Constitutional Convention that would be asked of voters on the November 2008 ballot. Of the 31 local Leagues participating, 27 opposed holding a convention; four were undecided. The LWVIL Board voted to adopt a position opposing the call to convention because:

- There was a high risk of exposing the entire constitution to revision and possible loss of the gains made in the 1970 constitution.
- The cost of the convention.
- Relative ease of the amendment process with the 1970 Constitution.
- Concern about the influence of special interest groups in both delegate selection and the convention discussions.

- Concern about the delegate election process.
- Risk that the current dysfunction in state government would extend to the convention, since the General Assembly would set the parameters for the election of delegates as well as the budget for the convention.
- Public education on the issues was lacking.
- Many of the changes that citizens were requesting were available legislatively.

Once again, LWVIL members campaigned to defeat the Convention referendum for a Convention and, as a member of the Alliance to Protect the Illinois Constitution, participated in a strong, highly visible and wide-spreads media campaign to defeat the proposal. On November 4, 2008, the call to convention was defeated with about 58% of the voters saying no.

Specific Constitutional Provisions

The League's 1969/1979 position on reducing the size of the legislature with single-member districts and eliminating cumulative voting was implemented with the passage of the cutback amendment. This achievement allowed LWVIL to drop the position from the program in 1989.

1999: LWVIL Convention adopted a study of cumulative voting, contingent on available funding. Cumulative voting was a component of the Election Systems Study (1999-2002). In responding to the Election Systems questionnaire submitted to them, League members did not support a return to cumulative voting.

Merit Selection of Judges

The League has been a strong advocate for merit selection of judges, working over the years for a merit selection amendment. The legislature has failed thus far to place the issue on the ballot. In October 2000, the

LWVIL Board reaffirmed the merit selection position, choosing not to support public financing as an incremental step toward achieving merit selection.

However, at the 2001 LWVIL Convention, a Will of the Convention Motion directed the LWVIL Board to reexamine the merit selection position to determine “a plan of action for implementation of the position in the current political environment.” Convention delegates wanted to know if the original study allowed for incremental steps to ensure an independent judiciary.

A review of League history and action dealing with merit selection of judges revealed that, between 1967 and 1986, the League had supported a number of different combination “local option” and mandatory merit selection proposals. LWVIL supported the local option proposals as the “only politically realistic way to go.” Based on this review, the Board concluded, and the 2003 LWVIL Convention concurred, that support for public financing of judicial elections is in keeping with the position’s goals, particularly in light of the escalating costs of judicial races and slow progress towards the goals of merit selection.

Local Government

The League continues to support the enactment of legislation to provide a process for the orderly transfer of power when units of government are dissolved or their structure or boundaries are changed. Lack of such enabling legislation has been a major obstacle to local decisions to change the structure of government.

Home Rule

The League strongly supports provisions in the 1970 Constitution that allow certain local governments to adopt home rule. The League opposes any attempt to restrict this option.

Although the LWVIL position supports the home rule provision in the constitution, a local League must complete a local study if members want to take a position on the question of home rule for their own community.

Recall and Term Limits Amendments (See State Election Laws)

Other LWVIL action

- Protected the League's position for an appointed State Board of Education with authority to appoint a State Superintendent by opposing attempts to abolish the Board, elect Board members or elect the Superintendent.
- Opposed proposals to restrict the consideration of appropriations and substantive legislation to single sessions of the legislature.
- Opposed efforts to make the Revenue article more restrictive.
- Opposed efforts to abolish judicial retention, a system by which a sitting judge runs on a nonpartisan ballot on his or her record only.
- Successfully supported an amendment on the November 1998 ballot calling for the appointment of two citizen members to the Courts Commission. A commission with authority to discipline judges was part of the League's position on the Constitution in 1970.
- Played a leadership role in coordinating opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment scheduled to appear on the November 1990 ballot. The Tax Accountability Amendment sought to require a three-fifths vote of the General Assembly to increase taxes. In the belief that the proposal went beyond the limited citizen initiative allowed under the Constitution and was contrary to the principles of responsible fiscal policy, the LWVIL formed a coalition which filed an

amicus brief in the successful legal challenge to the amendment. The League successfully opposed an effort in the state legislature to approve a similar constitutional amendment for the November 1996 ballot.

2009-2011: The Judicial Performance Commission of Cook County—Pilot Project
As merit selection of judges and money in judicial elections again came to the public's attention, the LWVIL teamed up with the Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, in cooperation with the Chicago Council of Lawyers, to participate in a Judicial Performance Commission of Cook County (JPC). Two LWV members have served as Commissioners, working to educate Cook County voters about which judges should not be retained and to identify judicial performance issues which, while not disqualifying, are things the JPC believes can and should be remedied. Since its inception, the Commission has

- Began evaluating 22 judges with performance issues; sent evaluation reports to the presiding judges where they sit;
- Met with Chief Judge Evans;
- Designed a court watching program. Court watchers are being identified and trained for program expansion.

For action on constitutional proposals made under other LWVIL positions, see: Term Limits, School Finance, Right to bail - Criminal Justice, and laws protecting children under Children's Services.

County Government Structure 1991

LWVIL Position:

- Citizens in each county should have the power to initiate change in the structure of county government. Structure refers to form of government; number of county board members;

single member, at-large or multimember districts or a combination thereof; county board chairman elected at-large or by peers; or elected county executive.

- Signature requirements for the petition process for citizen-initiated change in the structure of county government must be reasonable. The number of signatures needed should be a percentage of the actual voters in a recent jurisdiction-wide election rather than a percentage of the registered voters in the jurisdiction. Citizens who have successfully completed the initiative process should be assured of ballot access.
- The Illinois County Executive Act should provide a clear separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. The Act should provide easily understood referendum language for non-home rule counties voting to adopt the county executive form of government.
- County legislative bodies should have the right to require independently elected county officials to adhere to the same personnel and procurement systems as appointed county department heads.

Background:

1989 LWVIL Convention delegates adopted a county government structure study. The experiences of four Leagues spurred the study and formed the basis for concurrence.

Although Peoria citizens, by League-initiated referendum, voted three to one in favor of reducing their county board from 27 to 9 members, the board refused to accede to the voters' wishes. Subsequently, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that, under present law, a citizen-initiated referendum on the size of a county board is not binding.

The DuPage County Inter-League Organization (ILO) studied the county executive form of government and decided that it might be suited to their county's needs. After examining the Illinois County Executive Act, the League found many problems. In particular, under the current

Act, the county executive serves as the head of both the legislative and executive branches, which does not provide the traditional system of checks and balances valued in the United States. Because of this and other flaws, the DuPage ILO was unable to recommend that their county adopt this form of government.

The Lake County ILO agreed with the DuPage County ILO that the Illinois County Executive Act was flawed but preferred a different form of county leadership for Lake County: a county board president elected-at-large. Because the Peoria decision denies citizens the legal power to institute an at-large chair, the Lake County ILO also recognized the need to empower Illinois citizens with the authority to enact binding referenda on the structure of county government.

The Cook County ILO was successful in working to increase safeguards against patronage and procurement favoritism in county government. The League worked for the enactment of a county requirement that independently elected department heads (e.g., sheriff, clerk, recorder of deeds) must abide by the same personnel and procurement procedures as appointed department heads. Leagues participating in the LWVIL study wanted to be able to support state legislation that would give their counties the right to enact similar requirements.

A grant from the Illinois State Bar Association enabled the League to fund research by a law student on state court decisions on citizen initiative. The study included petition requirements for various citizen referenda in Illinois and a comparison with citizen initiative requirements across the country.

LWVIL Action:

No action has ever been taken by the LWVIL under this position. Local and County Leagues take action under this position.

State Election Laws

Registration and Elections

1972 - 1977, revised 1999

LWVIL Position:

The League of Women Voters supports uniformity of election laws and procedures throughout the state. Registration and voting methods should ensure the integrity of the election system, maximize voters' unencumbered access to the ballot, preserve the secrecy of the ballot and ensure accurate and timely vote tabulation. Citizens should have the right to file complaints and writs of mandamus to force compliance with election laws.

The League opposes any legislation that would require a declaration of party at the time of registration or at any time prior to a primary election. A voter's selection of a party's ballot in one primary should not be binding beyond that election.

Registration

A combined in-person and mail registration system should be maintained. Citizens with more than one residence should have the option of choosing which residence will be the primary residence for registration. The length of residence required to register to vote should be the minimum needed to allow adequate time for verification and publication of voter lists. Registration procedures should include safeguards against fraud.

Elections

The League supports an efficient, practical and regular election schedule. At each polling place there should be election judges from more than one of the major political parties. The League supports mandatory training and periodic retraining of all election judges. In tabulating votes, any mark or other indication that

clearly shows the intent of the voter should be counted. Additional election officials for tallying ballots should be used when conditions necessitate.

State Board of Elections

1971, revised 1999

LWVIL Position:

The League of Women Voters supports a state board of elections. Such agency should ensure that election laws are applied uniformly and properly throughout the state. The state board of elections should supervise and coordinate: voter registration; candidate filing, reporting, and certification; and the nomination and election processes.

Organization

Members of the state board of elections should be appointed to staggered terms by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. No political party should constitute a majority of the board and the board's size should ensure that all parts of the state are represented. A means for resolving tie votes should be utilized. The League is not opposed to compensation beyond expenses, reflecting the scope of the job.

Responsibilities

The state board of elections should interpret and compel compliance with the election laws and should have the power to receive complaints, conduct investigations, issue subpoenas, hold hearings, impose penalties and pursue appropriate enforcement action through the courts. The board should appoint an administrative director to oversee the day-to-day operations of the agency and may delegate authority below the state level, as appropriate. To ensure understanding and compliance with election laws and procedures, the board should 1) provide training for registration and election officials and 2) prepare and disseminate information to educate citizens and candidates.

The board should work for codification of election laws and should continually study and recommend improvements in election laws and

procedures. It should make annual reports to the General Assembly, the governor and the public.

Election Systems Criteria 2002

LWVIL Position:

The League believes that a good election system must meet the following two criteria:

- An election system should provide stability and continuity of governance by assuring smooth transitions following elections and should produce a legislature that addresses the problems of society effectively and in a timely manner.
- An election system should also be resistant to both outright fraud and forms of political manipulation, such as those involving nominating processes and procedures, gerrymandering, or financing of campaigns.

The League believes these additional criteria should also be considered when judging an elections system. A system should include:

- Encourage close links between legislators and their constituents so as to promote citizen participation in government and help to assure accountability.
- Be easy to use and to administer. Citizens should be able to cast their votes with ease and to understand the election results without difficulty. Complicated voting procedures that discourage voter participation and create confusion over voting results should be avoided. Consideration should be given to the administrative costs of conducting elections.
- Produce a legislature that fairly and accurately reflects the views found among the public, enabling voters to be confident that their voices will be heard.
- Encourage high-quality political campaigns by instituting procedures that promote discussion of issues and discourage mudslinging and dirty tricks.
- Encourage high voter turnout, recognizing that while administrative matters, such as barriers to registration, can affect turnout, the election system itself can also influence it.

Background:

Election laws and their reform have been a primary concern of the League of Women Voters since its founding at the time women achieved the vote. Legislative action in this area has resulted in:

- Permanent registration
- A shorter ballot
- Reduced residency requirements
- Creation of the appointed State Board of Elections (SBE),
- Consolidation of elections,
- Extension of voting hours to 7 p.m.,
- Liberalization of the deputy registrar law,
- Legislation permitting detainees awaiting trial to vote absentee,
- Amending the election code to permit poll watching by certain civic groups and,
- National lowering of the voting age.

While barriers to voting such as voter ID laws have been enacted in other states, the LWVIL closely monitors such proposals for Illinois and is prepared to take swift action if any such measures gain traction here.

Note: Laws governing campaign finance are found in the Illinois Election Code.

LWVIL Action:

1976-77: A study of primary elections did not result in any consensus regarding an open or a closed primary system, the League has opposed legislation that makes participation in the primary election more restrictive, particularly the persistent efforts to require pre-primary party registration.

1983: LWVIL worked with a coalition for legislation to enable school officials, librarians, local union officials, and officers of bona fide statewide civic organizations to designate deputy registrars. Since then, the League has worked to strengthen the deputy registrar program.

The League has supported legislation to make absentee and in-person voting more accessible to disabled citizens and to broaden in-person absentee voting opportunities for all citizens. The League's study of election consolidation found that League members were concerned about having a long time period between the primary and the general election and preferred holding elections annually in the spring and November. League efforts to have a later primary have not been successful. The League continues to work for the expansion of voter registration opportunities and election laws codification.

Computerized Voter Registration List

LWVIL has been on record as favoring the creation of a computerized statewide voter registration system since the early 1980's and has made that support known to the State Board of Elections (SBE) several times.

1998: The SBE formed a study group to develop conceptual design recommendations for a voter registration computer network and the LWVIL Election Laws Specialist was a member. The group's report was submitted to the SBE in September 1998, but creation of a computerized voter registration system was delayed due to resistance by local election authorities. There was minimal effort to implement the group's recommendations until 2001 when the SBE hired a consulting firm to design a computerized voter registration system. Work on the system was proceeding well until the fall of 2002 when the State faced a budget crisis and FY03 funding for the voter registration project was cut to the FY02 level. LWVIL lobbied unsuccessfully for restoration of the funds. In October 2002, the money ran out and work on the project stopped.

2002: The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) passed by Congress in October, included funds to assist states in establishing their

voter registration databases. Illinois received some "early money" under this proviso that enabled the SBE to bring the consultants back to complete the Illinois Data Export Application/Uniform Data Form (IDEA/UDF) project. The goal to have the system in place for the March 2004 primary election was not met.

2009: In the spring, the SBE announced that voter registration records from all local election authorities had been added to the Illinois Voter Registration System's database bringing Illinois into compliance with HAVA's requirements.

National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)

Often called Motor Voter, this item was a national priority throughout the 1990's. After NVRS was signed into law in 1993, the action moved to the states. LWVIL and other supporters were unsuccessful in getting the General Assembly to pass the necessary implementing legislation so, when NVRA became effective on January 1, 1995, Illinois was not in compliance.

Immediately LWVIL and others, including the U.S. Department of Justice, filed suits to force Illinois to comply. In response to the consolidated suits both the federal district court and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the State must comply. The State chose to institute a two-tier voter registration system in which persons registering under NVRA provisions were eligible to vote in federal elections only. Those wishing to vote in local and state elections had to register a second time. The League and its coalition partners continued to work for passage of legislation to implement NVRA and to end the two-tier voter registration system. A bill to make the two-tier voter registration system a part of the Illinois Election Code was defeated in the 1995 veto session.

1995: LWVIL filed a second lawsuit in November challenging the constitutionality of the two-tier voter registration system. The League's position prevailed in both the circuit court and the Illinois Appellate Court. In October 1996, the State dropped its legal challenge. NVRA continues to be implemented under rules and regulations created by the State Board of Elections.

Many of the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) provisions also amended NVRA, thus, when the state amended the state code to incorporate all HAVA, NVRA matters were included. The League remains committed to having all NVRA requirements incorporated into the Illinois Election Code.

As Illinois attempted to meet the federal requirements of NVRA, a number of problems arose. In response to problems in the drivers license facilities, the Secretary of State convened an advisory committee in 1999. The committee was asked to evaluate the existing implementation of the federal Motor Voter Law (NVRA) in Illinois and to recommend administrative improvements. The LWVIL Election Laws Specialist served on the advisory committee that issued its report in November 2000. Several of the committee's recommendations were implemented in 2001. The Secretary of State's staff continued to make changes in its administrative procedures based on the committee's recommendations and reports that all have been implemented. Additional procedural changes have been initiated by the SOS's office in response to problems as they arose. Monitoring NVRA implementation remains a League priority.

Straight Ticket Voting and the Legislative Process Three Readings Rule

1998: LWVIL joined, as an amicus, in a case before the Illinois Court of Appeals

supporting the plaintiffs-appellants' contention that the passage of PA 89-700 violated the three-readings rule (prior to passage legislation must be "read" - presented and/or debated by each chamber of the legislature - three separate times). The legislation banned straight-ticket voting in Illinois. The League's brief addressed only the legislative process, not the merits of the legislation. The Appeals Court accepted the brief; the Illinois Supreme Court denied it. Both courts upheld the lower court ruling. Thus, Illinois no longer has straight-ticket voting.

1993: LWVIL Convention delegates approved the creation of a statewide committee to research the issue of contested elections and to work towards reform legislation regarding automatic recounts of election results. The committee made a progress report at 1994 Interim Council; however, the resignation of the committee chair immediately after Council suspended work on this issue. No replacement chairperson was found and the item was not readopted at the 1995 LWVIL Convention.

Election Systems

The 1997 LWVIL delegates adopted a Will of the Convention to review State Election Laws positions, including consideration of proportional representation. The review committee concluded that proportional representation was too much to study given the burden of the overall position review, and recommended a task force be appointed to consider it. However, there were insufficient volunteers for the task force. Delegates at the 1999 LWVIL Convention adopted the revised state election laws position.

1999: State Convention delegates adopted a study of cumulative voting for the Illinois House contingent upon funding from an appropriate foundation source. The Joyce

Foundation provided a grant in the summer of 2000 and the League's state committee began its study of Election Systems in the fall. Due to the grant's requirements, the study was expanded to include an examination of other methods for electing representatives besides cumulative voting.

In a caucus meeting at the 2001 LWVIL Convention, members of the state committee presented information and a progress report to convention delegates. The study was readopted by the convention. As a means for reaching member agreement, League members used a mail-in form to identify and rank criteria important for a good election system. Responses were received from members in 42 local Leagues and two members at-large. In January 2002, the State Board reported the results and issued a position statement. The position is written in broad terms that will allow the League flexibility in evaluating any proposed electoral system. There is no reference to cumulative voting in the position because the response to the Election Systems questionnaire indicated that League members did not support a return to cumulative voting.

Although local Leagues were actively and repeatedly offered a prepared discussion model and pass-through grants to conduct public educational forums on the issue, only one public forum was held and the League was unable to meet the grant's requirement to engage the public in a discussion of election systems. The single forum drew a very limited audience but received good press coverage.

Election Administration Reform
2001 - 2007: At the LWVIL Annual Legislative Briefing in February, League members were given an overview of Illinois' decentralized election administration. During discussion, members agreed that the League

should undertake a deeper examination of Illinois' election administration. Following the Convention that year, LWVIL created the Election Administration Reform (EAR) Committee in response to the perceived problems relating to the November 2000 election. The EAR Committee, working under the League's Making Democracy Work Action Focus, was directed to examine the administration of elections in Illinois. For six years (2001-07) the committee undertook a number of activities, including meeting with representatives of the secretary of state, the state board of elections, and the disabled community. The committee surveyed local election officials and conducted three poll watching projects. In an effort to understand the decision-making processes affecting election administration the committee had ongoing contacts with several local election authorities. The committee reported its findings to League members through articles in the Illinois Voter, in memos, and in presentations at state meetings.

Among the issues that the committee looked at were: the use of students as election judges, polling place accessibility, testing and certification of voting equipment, limitations on the issuance of poll watching credentials, recruitment and training of election judges, voting rights for detainees, development of the statewide voter registration database, implementation of the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and the effects of new voting equipment on the electoral process.

The EAR Committee's work led to passage of two League-initiated bills

- 1) Allowing detainees awaiting trial to vote absentee (2005) and
- 2) Permitting civic organizations to poll watch (2007).

The League's revised election laws positions completed and adopted in 1999 enabled the

EAR committee to take action when needed. In 2007, the EAR committee was dissolved and its findings were incorporated into the election laws position. (see page 35 for the new position statement).

Adoption of HAVA and Election Conduct 2002: HAVA adoption provided federal funds to help states implement changes they were forced to adopt. Illinois moved quickly by creating a state planning committee to develop a HAVA state plan. LWVIL's president served on the planning committee. Early in the process steps were taken to replace the punch card voting equipment and to make administrative changes not requiring election code amendments. Amendments to the Illinois Election Code were achieved with the adoption of Omnibus Elections bills in 2005 and 2006. Summary reports of these two bills were prepared and made available to local Leagues. Additional amendments were included in the 2007 Omnibus Elections bill.

The 2006 primary election was the first test of many of the new procedures and of new voting equipment. Many problems were identified and election officials worked to correct them before the November 2006 general election; however, that election revealed many technical problems in several election jurisdictions. They were being addressed through the combined efforts of the State Board of Elections, the affected local election authorities, and the voting equipment vendors. Reports from the April 2007 election showed fewer problems but turnout is typically low for odd-year spring elections.

2009-2011: LWVIL monitored press reports about voting problems informed League members about legislative changes relating to voter registration, residency requirements, absentee ballot applications, Early Voting regulations and new rules governing voting by military personnel and their families.

Two new provisions that became effective in January 2011 should make voting a bit easier -- the Primary date was moved back to March and candidates for governor and lieutenant governor must now run as a team in the primary. LWVIL did not act on either of these bills; our position favors a later primary date and we do not have a position on candidates running as a team.

Term Limits

1992, 1999

LWVIL Position:

The League opposes constitutional or statutory term limitations for members of the General Assembly based on the League's support for accountability, representativeness, and effective performance and for a dynamic balance of power between the legislative and the executive branches.

(See LWVUS position Congress and The Presidency)

Background and LWVIL Action:

The LWVUS Board announced in 1991 that the League opposes term limits for members of the U.S. Congress. Delegates to the LWVUS 1992 Convention approved a motion allowing state and local Leagues to take action against term limits for state and local legislative offices based on the national position.

The LWVIL Board approved extending the position to the Illinois General Assembly and 1993 LWVIL delegates Convention concurred.

In the fall of 1994, the League was prepared to oppose a proposed constitutional amendment to limit the terms of state legislators to eight years. The question was

not placed on the ballot because the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the petition calling for the referendum was unconstitutional.

Based on the national position, local Leagues may oppose term limits for their county/village board or city council without a local study. However, if a League wants to support term limits for these local officials, a local study and consensus must be conducted. A local position to support term limits cannot be based on issues of representativeness, accountability or effective performance, or on a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches because these criteria are the basis for the national and state positions opposing term limits.

The 2009 Convention delegates recommended an update to the Recall and Term Limits position but members did not come forward to serve on a committee so the position was not reviewed. The General Assembly then placed an amendment to the Illinois Constitution to provide for a special election to recall a Governor on the November 2010 election ballot. A LWVIL committee developed a brochure informing citizens about the provisions and the pros and cons of the amendment to supplement the official material provided by the state. 65% of voters were in favor and it was adopted.

State Redistricting 1995

LWVIL Position:

The League supports a redistricting process which is:

- timely and orderly and which includes a formal announced timetable,
- makes information and related data available to all who wish to participate in the process,
- offers ample opportunities for expert testimony and public reaction to the proposed maps,

- encourages compromise among partisan representatives,
- avoids a partisan stalemate, and
- results in maps which offer the voters a choice of candidates for election.

The League supports the following criteria for drawing state legislative districts:

1. Population equity: The average deviation among all districts in each house shall not exceed a range of 1 percent, with no more than a 5 percent variance between the most populated and the least populated districts. Districts shall be based on current census statistics.
2. All districts shall be drawn in compliance with the United States Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent amendments.
3. Compact and contiguous: All districts shall be compact, with the smallest perimeter possible, and contiguous, adjacent to one another with more than a single point of contiguity. Areas connected only at points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.
4. Boundaries:
 - a. The number of counties, towns and cities divided among more than one district shall be as small as possible.
 - b. Districts shall follow existing political boundaries (i.e., county, municipal, ward lines), as far as possible.
 - c. No city block shall be subdivided, since a city block is the smallest parcel for which census data are available.
 - d. Where possible, district lines shall follow permanent and easily recognized features, such as toll ways, expressways, highways, streets, rivers, and clear geographical features, and when practical, shall coincide with census tract boundaries.
5. No district shall be drawn with the intent to favor a political party or incumbent legislator or congressman.
6. Each state senatorial district shall consist of two entire house districts as currently

stipulated in the state constitution. Ideally each state senatorial district shall be entirely within a single U.S. Congressional district.

These criteria may be applied to any redistricting process.

(Also see LWVUS Apportionment)

Background:

Prior to the adoption of the 1970 Illinois Constitution, LWVIL developed a position relating to apportionment that included a preferred method for redistricting legislative districts after each decennial census. Article IV, Section 3 of the 1970 Constitution details procedures to be followed in legislative redistricting. Four redistrictings have taken place using these rules. In 1981, 1991, and 2001, because there was no agreement on the proposed maps in either the legislature or the Legislative Redistricting Commission, it was necessary to select a tiebreaker member for the Legislative Redistricting Commission. The selected maps reflected the partisanship of the tiebreaker member's vote. Suits were filed each time and the new legislative districts were determined based on court rulings.

In 1992, LWVIL created a Redistricting Task Force to develop a position for local Leagues' concurrence. Delegates to the 1993 LWVIL Convention adopted the position on State Redistricting.

LWVIL Action: In 1992, Illinois' Secretary of State created a Bipartisan Review Commission to consider reforms in Illinois' Procedures for Re-mapping Legislative Districts. With the adoption of its State Redistricting position, the League was prepared to comment on this commission's recommendations.

The Review Commission was reconvened in 1998 and submitted its report to the governor early in 1999. The commission

recommended changes that required a constitutional amendment. A Senate Joint Resolution, calling for submitting a proposed constitutional amendment to the voters, was introduced in May 1999. The amendment to Articles IV and XIV would have changed the way in which the State redistricts the Illinois House and Senate. If passed by both houses, the proposition would have been voted on in November 2000. If approved by the voters, it would have taken effect beginning with redistricting in 2001. The League was represented on the commission. Since the General Assembly never adopted the resolution, there was no opportunity to vote on the new redistricting process. In response to requests from legislative staff, the League submitted a copy of League's redistricting position to both the House and Senate Redistricting Committees. Redistricting statements were made to legislative committees, which held hearings around the state.

At the 2009 LWVIL Convention, delegates voted to make an accurate census count and redistricting action focus issues for the 2009 – 2011 biennium. True Census Count 2010 and Redistricting Reform actions included:

2010 Census Activities

LWVIL undertook a major role striving to ensure a complete and accurate count of all residents in Illinois during Census 2010. Governor Quinn named LWVIL the chair of the Illinois Complete Count Committee. Several local leagues took an active interest and participated in census activities of their own, including creating local complete count committees. Census 2010 counted 12,830,632 Illinois residents and while Illinois gained in population, it will lose a Congressional seat. Illinois had 25 districts in 1960; after the 2012 elections, Illinois will send 18 members to Congress.

Redistricting Activities

Citizens' Initiative--Anticipating the redistricting of Illinois General Assembly districts, LWVIL and other organizations formed the Illinois Fair Map Amendment initiative, the goal of which was to amend the Illinois Constitution by collecting enough signatures on petitions to get the initiative placed on the November 2010 election ballot. From January through April 2010, local Leagues held informational meetings about the amendment and circulated petitions. LWVIL led the coalition, met with editorial boards and collected the completed petitions. LWVIL was invited to testify before the Senate Redistricting Committee as well as the House Judiciary about the goals of the amendment. Despite these efforts, the number of signatures was insufficient to get the initiative placed on the ballot; time and money (not enough of each) worked to the petition effort's disadvantage. However, the work LWVIL did during this period galvanized awareness of the need for redistricting reform.

Redistricting-- LWVIL launched its census and redistricting project in February 2009 and worked with local Leagues throughout the state organizing presentations and forums to educate League members and communities about the redistricting process in Illinois and the need for change. Other activities included inviting Justin Levitt from the Brennan Center to at the February 2010 Issues Briefing; preparing materials and convening a training session held in September to prepare League members to speak on redistricting issues; and offering a workshop on the topic at the 2011 Issues Briefing. Local Leagues also wrote letters to the editor about redistricting, met with their local legislators on the topic and asked questions at candidates' forums and as part of Vote 411.

2010: A group of reform and civil rights organizations came together under a coalition umbrella -- the Illinois Campaign for Accountable Redistricting (ICAR) to show that Illinois could change the way it redistricts itself using principles developed during the Fair Map initiative. The coalition obtained grants to purchase software to draw maps, employ staff, promote the process and engage input from the public. LWVIL worked in coalition with other organizations to change the redistricting process using these principles.

2011: As part of their promise to introduce transparency to the redistricting process, the Illinois House and Senate Redistricting Committees held hearings from March to May to receive public comment on the redistricting process and eventually comment on the initial legislative map. LWVIL was invited to testify and members from eight Leagues presented LWVIL testimony.