



Illinois Voter

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League Activities Generate Tremendous Voter Interest During Election 2006

Local Leagues provided an array of voter education opportunities for the 2006 General Election. Dozens of voter registration drives, candidates forums, voter guides, and other web-based and printed resources were available for public use. Enthusiastic League members statewide proved they were up to the challenge of educating as many voters as possible with non-partisan information and activities. This issue of the Illinois Voter is dedicated to the many League members and supporters who worked countless hours to ensure every citizen had the opportunity to cast an informed vote this November. It is the great work of all the local Leagues and members statewide that helps the League continue to be at the forefront of nonpartisan voter education initiatives. This issue contains many examples of fantastic voter education opportunities.

Sixth Congressional District Forum a Great Success

The Leagues of DuPage County held a candidate forum for 6th Congressional District candidates Tammy Duckworth (D) and Peter Roskam (R) at the College of DuPage. The Leagues had assistance from supporting organizations including The Social Action Committee of Congregation Etz Chaim, the Union League Club of Chicago, and DuPage United.

Anticipating an attendance of approximately six hundred, on October 12, the sponsors were pleased to welcome over 1,000 people interested in seeing these two candidates in their only public debate. The registered media included television crews from Danish, Swedish, Japanese, and Al-Jazeera stations as well as several local TV affiliates. Many print reporters from the area also attended, in addition to journalists from California, France, Canada, Norway, and a few web-based reporters, too.

The hour flew by with a lot of mud-slinging and some actual discussion on issues. The League was the only organization trusted by both campaigns to hold this debate, which was definitely a forum of national (and international) interest.



The highly anticipated 6th District Congressional forum generated international attention.

(Turn to Page 5 for More on League Election Activities)

Illinois Assembly Met in November

The Illinois General Assembly reconvened in November for its Veto Session. Though the session is short, many things can happen because it takes place AFTER the election.

These sessions are times to **contact your legislators.**

Tell them that Illinois must adequately fund our schools and social services – that we must reform our revenue system to provide for vital public services without mortgaging the future!

Save the Date

LWVIL Annual Issues Briefing

Saturday, February 3, 2007
Loyola University Chicago-Water Tower Campus

Morning Session:

The State of the State Election Laws

Afternoon Workshops:

*Take Action With the League-Advocate
Seeking Judicial Independence
Understanding Criminal Justice*

From the President

This election season, a plethora of the campaign information has been of a negative nature, highlighting the need for the League, as an organization that provides nonpartisan venues, to educate the public and build an informed electorate. Polls for the Gubernatorial Election showed voters had more highly unfavorable than favorable opinions of the major party candidates. The candidates could not even negotiate mutual time for debates, where the electorate could evaluate them side by side.



Leagues throughout the state worked hard to organize and host forums for many U.S Congressional, State and County offices. League-sponsored debates for the Sixth and Tenth Congressional Districts each had over 1,000 people in attendance, demonstrating the great public interest in forums where candidates can be evaluated face to face.

Since an Immigration Study was adopted in June 2005, many local Leagues have had informational meetings open to League members and the public. People with varying points of view have attended these meetings, where participants have treated each other respectfully. A meeting sponsored the LWV of Carpentersville/Dundee Area in October was cancelled by the Park District, which was scheduled to provide meeting space for the forum, due to the objection of the Carpentersville's Village President. He felt the topic was too heated for that area and trouble could ensue at the meeting.

This incident resulted in good press for the League as both Carpentersville League members and LWVIL were able to explain our mission to educate our members and the public by having informed discussions on issues. In a Daily Herald article Bonnie Kalaway, Carpentersville/Dundee President, stated, "People in a democracy should be able to exchange ideas and discuss issues – even controversial issues – with civility and with respect for the opinions of others..." Leagues will be holding more consensus meetings on Illinois immigration issues over the next few months. I hope all members will participate in a discussion on this timely issue.

The conduct of many campaigns and questions about having a civil discussion on a hot-button issue demonstrate the need for the continuing presence and growth of League. To promote such growth, both local Leagues and individual members should think about how they can encourage membership. Public forums and meetings are ideal opportunities to invite people to join. LWVUS has developed ideas for incorporating membership messages in all of our activities. Check out their website, www.lwv.org, under "For Members" and "Membership Recruitment Initiative."

All the contributions made to the League of Women Voters of Illinois by members and friends are greatly appreciated. Take a look at the full list of annual appeal donors in this edition. They enable the League to continue its hands-on work to safeguard democracy through civic participation. LWVIL is starting the annual fundraising initiative now. First and foremost, I hope you will support your local Leagues. Additionally, I hope you will support LWVIL through our Annual Giving/Phon-a-thon Campaign and/or participation in the annual *State of the State* Event. Look for more information to follow.

The best to you and your family this holiday season.

Paula

Save the Date LWVIL Convention 2007

June 22-24, 2007

Matteson, Illinois

(South Suburban Cook County)

More information to come

See You There!

An Afternoon of Theater Benefits the League

Seventy League members and friends took a break from the hustle and bustle of the General Election to join the League for a matinee performance of HIZZONER, a world-premiere portrayal of Mayor Richard Daley the first.

Neil Guntoli's portrayal of Daley I and the performances of the entire PropThtr troupe were fantastic. Attendees raved about the show, and appreciated the opportunity to revisit this important time in Chicago's history.

More than \$1600 was raised from the performance. Proceeds benefit the LWVIL Education Fund.



LWVIL President Paula Lawson poses with "HIZZONER" (Neil Guntoli)

LWVIL In the News

Coverage on ABC 7 Chicago and FOX Chicago addressed the League's stance that the lack of Gubernatorial Debates was a "disservice to Illinois voters."

LWVIL issued Letters to the Editor encouraging people to register to vote, vote early, and be prepared to report any problems at the polls.

LWVIL President Paula Lawson appeared on an Election Night program hosted by Columbia College, Northwestern University, and WYCC TV.

Visit the LWVIL Website

www.lwvil.org

Post Event Listings,
Find Voter Resources
And More...

Member Access:

Username: lww
Password: 332

LWVIL Diversity Policy

The League of Women Voters of Illinois, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief in and commitment to diversity and pluralism. The LWVIL recognizes that diverse perspectives are necessary for responsible and effective decision-making in democratic organizations. LWVIL affirms its commitment to remove barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of age, race, color, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or national origin; and to actively be inclusive.

LWVIL News

Membership is Key to Growing Your League

The key to the effectiveness of any organization is its membership. LWVUS is developing a Membership Recruitment Initiative to be distributed to all Leagues. In the meantime, individual Leagues should make every effort to use what they do best to help attract new members.



The League of Women Voters is known for its work on election-related issues. Membership recruitment, therefore, should be done around each League's voter service efforts. While the 2006 elections are done, Leagues should review their calendar to identify scheduled events to engage the public. Similarly, Leagues should check community calendars for activities sponsored by other organizations that could provide an opportunity to disseminate voter resources and membership information.

LWVUS developed the following message to help League's communicate the benefits of being a member:

The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Join LWV and be directly involved in shaping the important issues to keep our community strong, safe and vibrant. As an LWV member, you are a part of an organization where smart, active leaders work to create change in their communities. To join us, please visit... (INSERT YOUR LEAGUE CONTACT INFO).

More important than any message - **You must ASK people to join.** When talking with potential members, stress the values and opportunities afforded by League membership. Be sure to stress what the League will do for them; not what they need to do for League. Help to establish a personal connection. Give them easy opportunities to join. Make sure your League's website has a highly visible option for people to join. Make sure you have forms and sign up sheets at your events. When talking to someone who is interested in what your League is doing, **ASK** them to join right then and there!

First Annual Central Illinois Leadership Training Day a Success

In September, League members from Southern and Central Illinois gathered in Springfield for LWVIL's Central Illinois Leadership Training, featuring guest speaker Cristina Cray, Director of Legislation at the State Board of Elections (SBE).

Ms. Cray presented an overview of our current election laws. Describing SBE as a "catch-all for problems", providing guidance to county clerks and others, she emphasized that local officials fiercely guard their right to run their own elections and that full implementation of the Federal Help America Voter Act (HAVA) will be tough. Ms. Cray warned that issues, including early voting, temporary vs. permanent polling places, mandates to provide voting machines for individuals with disabilities, and finances, will all need to be clarified. She also predicted that future challenges include the Federal REAL ID Law, which imposes national standards for identification documents; the proposed legislation to require photo identification at polling places; and improvements to the new State Voter Guide now posted on the SBE website. She encouraged LWVIL to keep pushing its statewide poll watching legislation.

The training also included "ABCs of League," featuring discussions on advocacy, program planning, League studies, and membership, in addition to a moderator training. The day concluded with a League tour of the Lincoln Museum.



Issues Coordinator Eileen Lynch and President Paula Lawson lead a discussion at the Central IL Leadership Training.

LWVIL looks forward to hosting this training event again next year!

Work to Abolish the Death Penalty Continues

Janet Kittlaus of LWV Evanston represented LWVIL at the recent National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty Convention in Virginia. As a panelist, Janet described the partnership with the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty after the Illinois League adopted an abolition position in 2001. She also explained that the abolition position adopted at the 2006 LWVUS Convention now enabled all state Leagues to work towards the goal of abolition. LWVIL was recognized for its leadership in achieving this national position when Janet received an award in *Special Recognition for Volunteer Service*.

A film, ***Race to Execution***, debuted at the convention. It will air on PBS stations on March 27, 2007. The film provides a balanced perspective for local Leagues to educate their communities on the issue. A DVD of the film is also available. Contact Janet Kittlaus at dpconcurrency@lwvil.org for more information.

West Suburban LWV Hosts Ukrainian Visitors

The LWV of Oak Park & River Forest hosted five leaders from the Ukraine through the Open World Leadership Center program.

The League supplied a variety of activities around the idea of accountable governance and economic development. The visitors participated in discussions about Cook County Government, the political process, the judicial system, campaign finance and free press. The visitors also had the opportunity to be part of the Oak Park/River Forest LWV Candidates Fair.

Last year, LWV Lake Forest hosted a similar group from Russia.

LWVIL News continued

Immigration Study Update

The LWVIL Immigration Study Committee has finalized the consensus questions which will help local Leagues consider immigration and its impact in the economic, social and governmental policies. Please note that some existing League social policy positions, especially on education, housing and health care, could be applicable to the immigration issues considered in this study.

It is now time for local League participation. League presidents have received all the background and summary information needed for consensus reports. Additional copies are available upon request or on the LWVIL website. Consensus reports are due back to the LWVIL office by **March 1, 2007**. Between now and that date, local Leagues will need to:

- Review both packets of information
- Hold Immigration Program Meetings
- Hold Consensus Meeting(s)
- Have a Study Committee Complete Consensus Report
- Have a local League Board Review and Approve Report

Immigration policy generates a tremendous amount of discussion, so it is important to choose your consensus meeting facilitator carefully. It may be helpful to divide the materials among study committee members. In order to cover all the questions at your meeting, we urge you to assign a time limit for each consensus question and use a timer. Please note that it is common not to reach agreement on every consensus question.

Again, thank you for participating in this exciting study. If you have not already seen them, the consensus questions are below. Your League's input will be greatly appreciated and invaluable as we work towards an LWVIL position on immigration.

LWVIL Immigration Study Consensus Questions

- 1) Should the State of Illinois promote and fund local community efforts to provide orientation and counseling services for immigrants regardless of documentation status? Examples include:
 - Community assimilation
 - English as Second Language
 - Financial counseling
 - Housing and child care services or referrals
 - Preventive health care
 - Emergency health care
 - Transportation assistance
- 2) Should the State of Illinois promote, and provide funding for, educational programs and materials that seek to inform immigrant workers, both documented and undocumented, of their rights in the workplace?
- 3) Should the State of Illinois:
 - Provide "driving certificates" or some other proof of driving validation to undocumented drivers, allowing those drivers to drive legally and ensuring that they have passed a driving test?
 - Permit and encourage auto insurance providers to issue insurance coverage to holders of such driving certificates?
- 4) Should the State of Illinois require financial institutions doing business in Illinois to accept as legal forms of identification tax identification numbers and such documents as consular cards and passports issued by countries of origin?
- 5) Should the State of Illinois create a set-aside fund to help local taxing bodies offset the costs of the use of public education and emergency healthcare by undocumented immigrants and their families?
- 6) Should the State of Illinois empower local communities and municipalities to allow:
 - Documented immigrants the right to vote in certain local elections, provided that those immigrants have proof of residency?
 - Undocumented immigrants the right to vote in certain local elections, provided that those immigrants have proof of residency?
- 7) Should states or localities enact legislation or ordinances to:
 - Penalize landlords for renting to undocumented immigrants?
 - Prohibit the issuance of business permits to the undocumented?
- 8) Should state and local police be deputized to enforce immigration laws in Illinois?

Issue Update

Mental Health

LWVIL continues to partner with the Mental Health Summit and monitor the Fee-for-Service Conversion, a transformation from a system dependent on grants and state aid to a fee-for-service system dependent on reimbursement from the federal Medicaid program. A committee is in place to study the impact of the Fee-for-Service conversion on services for persons with serious mental illnesses.

Darlene Bakk, the LWVIL Mental Health Issue Specialist, would like information from local Leagues on mental health issues activities in which they are involved. Also, state mental health summaries can be requested by e-mailing info@lwvgenstc.org.

Judicial Independence Forum

The Leagues of McLean County, Greater Peoria and Champaign presented a forum entitled ***Democracy at Stake: Safeguarding our Impartial Judiciary***.

Funded by a grant from LWVUS, for programs to educate the public on the importance of judicial independence, this forum was attended by people from Central Illinois, Chicago, and statewide.

The forum covered topics including why an independent judiciary is critical to society; current threats to such independence; campaign funding issues in Illinois and across the country.

Congratulations to the Leagues on this very successful event.

League Election Activities Continued

Leagues throughout Illinois hosted a variety of voter education programs this election season. A small sample of the activities is featured below. The success of all the election activities demonstrates that the League continues to be a trusted and proven source for nonpartisan, unbiased voter information.

LWV of the Edwardsville Area held a Candidates Meeting. Eleven out of twelve possible participants attended. The meeting included Madison County Treasurer, Madison County Board Candidates in contested races, and Third Circuit Court Judicial Candidates. The event was very well attended and also broadcast several times on a local cable channel, ECTV Channel 10.

Over 50 people attended the 9th Congressional District Forum for incumbent U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, Democrat, and challenger Michael P. Shannon, Republican.

LWV President Paula Lawson served as moderator of this event. **The Leagues of the 9th Congressional District** sponsored this event.



LWV of Cook County and ABC 7 Chicago co-sponsored a debate between the candidates for Cook County Board President, Todd Stroger and Tony Peraica. This was the first and last televised debate between the two candidates in this hotly contested race.

The debate, broadcast live, and streamed on the ABC 7 Website, rated second only to World Series coverage in its timeslot.



More than 100 people attended a lively candidates' forum sponsored by **LWV of McDonough County**, in partnership with the Macomb High School Student Council. The event focused on two hotly-contested races for county clerk between Republican Gretchen DeJaynes and Democrat Gary Sherer, and for county sheriff between Republican Rick Van Brooker and incumbent Democrat Michael Johnson.

In addition, incumbent state representative Republican Rich Myers and Democrat Gail Russel answered questions from the audience, and county board candidates made two-minute presentations. A referendum issue concerning a Macomb sales tax was explained by Patrick Stout. The forum was moderated by Sally Egler, who organized the event with M. Anne Vick.

The forum was video-taped by Western Illinois University broadcasting students to be shown on the local-access television station.

Additionally, video tapes were given to the public libraries within the county. The League also produced a voters' guide, which appeared in all the county newspapers prior to the election.



LWV Park Ridge hosted a candidate and issues forum. The candidate forum for the 33rd State Senate race included Senator Cheryl Axley (R) and opponent Dan Kotowski (D).

The issues forum topic was discussion on whether or not to reduce the size of the City Council by changing from 2 to 1 alderman per ward. The moderator was Kathy Tate-Bradish, past president and current membership chair of LWV Evanston. The forum participants included Mayor Howard Frimark who was "pro", and former mayor Michael MaRous.

Both forums were lively, with more than 100 interested attendees. The evening was filmed by Comcast and shown at least two times before the election.

LWV of Oak Park & River Forest held a Candidates Fair. Speakers included candidates for Seventh and Eighth U.S. Representative District, Cook County President, Cook County Sheriff, and Cook County Commissioner for the Ninth District.

Other candidates in attendance included the Democratic candidate for Illinois Senator in the Thirty-ninth District and the Green party candidate for Illinois Treasurer. In addition, there were representatives for the Democratic candidate for Comptroller and the Republican candidate for Treasurer. Democratic, Republican and Green party representatives also participated and visited with the voters.

Thank You To Our 2005-2006 Phon-a-thon Contributors

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Thank you for your continued support of the League of Women Voters of Illinois**

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