

## NAVIGATING THE TIDES OF DEMOCRACY

(continued from page 1)

WHEREAS, the mission statement of the League of Women Voters is: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy,

WHEREAS, CIS and the League of Women Voters of Illinois (LWVIL) have similar and complementary mission statements, purposes, functions and activities throughout the state of Illinois; seek funding from the same or similar sources; and seek to realize savings by consolidating office operations,

THEREFORE, the delegates of the LWVIL at the State Convention in Rockford, Illinois on June 26, 2005 direct the LWVIL Board of Directors to consider and investigate allowing the Citizens Information Service (CIS) to merge into LWVIL. The board will report its findings and recommendation for action to the membership for local League agreement. Such agreement by local Leagues may be transmitted to LWVIL electronically or by other written communication. A simple majority of those Leagues voting is required for acceptance of the recommendation.

### Direction to the Board

The LWVIL Board was directed to study budgets and PMP in comparable states, provide list serves for online discussion, address state redistricting, inform members regarding office lease negotiations, provide Leagues with material on action foci, and support a position on abolition of the death penalty at the 2006 LWVUS Convention.

### Silent Auction

Thanks to the local Leagues for their contributions and individuals whose bids totaled over \$4,000! Thanks to Leigh Lakey (Greater Rockford), Nicki Poropat, and Gail Feiger Brown (Highland Park) for their organization of this fundraiser of tremendous value to LWVIL.



Linda Grist Cunningham, Executive Editor of the Rockford Register Star, presents "An Insider's Top Ten Tips for Working with Journalists."



LWVIL President Barb Lippai presents Eric Zorn with thanks and gifts.

### Pre-Convention and Convention Workshops

Pre-Convention workshops included Making a Big Splash in the Media, Ship to Shore Communication: Website Maintenance, Sailing Through Technology: Website Maintenance, Running a Tight Ship – Discovering the Hidden Potential of Effective League Meetings, and Surfing the Internet for Advocacy.

In addition to a Presidents' luncheon, convention workshops were held on Building Membership: Spotlight on Success (see page 2 for highlights), Navigating a Referendum, League's Issue Priorities: Process & Progress, and Voter Service – Beyond Voter Registration.

Many thanks to all who contributed to a very successful 52<sup>nd</sup> Convention of the League of Women Voters of Illinois especially to Mary-Lou Aagaard who served as our very capable parliamentarian, Convention co-chairs Vicky Greene and Anita Buchholz, local arrangements chair Judy Engblom, Rockford volunteers, staff, outgoing President Barb Lippai, and photographer and delegate Valerie Krejcie.

**Keynote Speaker Chicago Tribune Columnist Eric Zorn** was enthusiastically applauded by League members as he shared his remarks on Senator Durbin's apology, the flag burning amendment, and the future of journalism in the age of technology.

Saturday night's entertainment was folksinger Jim Post.



Parliamentarian Mary-Lou Aagaard and Issue Specialist Jan Kay

### Illinois Voter

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Founded in 1920, the League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization which encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. For membership information, call (312) 939-5935. Articles from the *Illinois Voter* may be reprinted in full with complete acknowledgment.

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Editor: Edith Auchter

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**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, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or national origin; and to actively seek to be inclusive.

## LWVIL 2005 - 2006 BOARD



**Seated:** Vice President Laurie Huget (Oak Park/River Forest), President Paula Lawson (Glencoe), Vice President Sylvia Tillman (Homewood/Flossmoor Area), Vice President Edith Auchter (Barrington)

**Standing:** Appointed Director Faye Grossman (Highland Park), Treasurer Nancy Marcus (Winnetka/Northfield/Kenilworth), Secretary Jan Dorner (Elmhurst), Elected Directors Robin LaBedz (Arlington Heights/Mt. Prospect/Bufalo Grove), Chris Slowik (Palos/Orland), Janice Whitfield (McDonough County), Kathryn Nesburg (Oak Park/River Forest), and Appointed Director Mary Klonowski (LaGrange).

**Not pictured:** Elected Directors Amanda Sheffer (Champaign County) and Annette Smith (Naperville)

## Campaign for the Future

Do you want to help ensure that the League continues to meet the changing needs of Illinois citizens in the years ahead? You can leave an important legacy for the future by contributing to the LWVILEF Endowment Fund, established to support the work of local and state League volunteers. To make a gift, please send your check (made out to the LWVILEF Endowment Fund) to the state League office - or call Nicki Poropat (312-939-5935 x36) to donate by credit card.



# Illinois Voter

Summer 2005  
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## NAVIGATING THE TIDES OF DEMOCRACY

The 52<sup>nd</sup> LWVIL Convention was held in Rockford from June 24-26, 2005 with a theme of "Navigating the Tides of Democracy." Rockford Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey declared Saturday, June 25, 2005 as "The League of Women Voters Day" urging its citizens to recognize and support the mission of both the League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford and the League of Women Voters of Illinois.



Mayor Linda Vaughn of Machesney Park thanked the League for hosting professional candidate forums and continuing to observe public meetings. Mayor Vaughn expressed concern regarding the number of registered voters who actually vote and encouraged League to continue voter registration efforts. Forty local Leagues including one Inter-League Organization attended and sent 127 delegates and one alternate.

### PMP and Budget Motions passed as presented

Delegates adopted a Per Member Payment (PMP) of \$19.00 for fiscal year 2005-2006 and \$24.00 for fiscal year 2006-2007. The LWVIL budget of \$312,799 for fiscal year 2005-2006 and \$372,225 for fiscal year 2006-2007 were adopted as proposed.

### Program Motions passed as presented

All current positions in Government (County Government Structure, Criminal Justice, Constitutional Implementation & Amendments, State Election Laws, Gun Control, Schools, State Fiscal Policies, State Redistricting), Natural Resources (Land Use, Large-scale Livestock Facilities, Pesticides), and Social Policy (Children's Services, Income Assistance, Mental Health) were readopted. Action Foci on Making Democracy Work and Funding of Public Education and Social Services were adopted. Delegates also adopted an Exploration Item on a 2010 State Constitutional Convention.

### Immigration Study adopted

Delegates voted to adopt a state study on **Immigration Issues in Illinois** contingent on funding, the scope of which will be: How should Illinois respond

to the challenges and opportunities of Immigration in the areas of economic policy, social policy, which includes education, and the governmental process? During the discussion, several local Leagues pledged funds for the study or offered to have their boards vote to pledge funds.

### Will of Convention Motion adopted

WHEREAS, Citizens Information Service of Illinois (CIS) was established in 1953 by the League of Women Voters of Chicago as an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization for the purpose of informing and educating citizens and community organizations to work together toward achieving more effective participation in civic and community affairs,

WHEREAS, the mission statement of CIS is:

- To promote active, informed participation in civic and community affairs.
- To enable all people to participate in public policy decisions by providing needed information.
- To help make minorities, low-income persons, immigrants and organizations a part of the decision-making process at every level – nation, state, county, city and community.
- To enable people to influence public policy decisions affecting their lives by identifying and removing barriers to participation,

*continued on page 4*

### DEVELOPMENT

A fall fundraiser is being planned to benefit the LWVIL Education Fund. Do you have corporate contacts? Would you be interested in serving on the development committee or host committee planning the event? Development must be an activity of the entire League membership to be successful. Please contact Nicki Poropat at the LWVIL office at (312) 939-5935 x36.

Thank you!



### THANK YOU, STAFF!

A huge thank you to Project Coordinator Emily Lieber (left), Development and Communications Coordinator Nicki Poropat (right), and Business Manager Judy Elsass for an outstanding job preparing for Convention in the absence of an Executive Director.

### IN MEMORIAM

**Laura Kramer Fisher**, 99, LWVIL President from 1949-1953, died May 7, 2005. Laura was the devoted mother of Louise Pollak Saltzman and Stephen J. Pollak; beloved wife of the late Maurice A. Pollak and the late Walter T. Fisher; loving grandmother of seven and great-grandmother of eleven. Funeral services were held Tuesday, May 10, at K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation. Laura established a pooled income fund to benefit the state and national League of Women Voters. Her obituary was published in the Chicago Tribune on 5/9/2005.

## CAPTAIN'S FIRST MATES

### CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT AWARD

Congratulations to **Marcia McConnell** of the Homewood/Flossmoor League! Mary Ann Guenzler and Pat Eden highlighted Marcia's contributions to the League that began outside of Marquette, Michigan. Marcia's three adult children were in attendance to hear of their mother's contributions in the area of Public Action to Deliver Shelter, Illinois Student Vote, and Election Administration Reform. She thanked and credited the League with being the organization that helps women grow.



### Making a Difference Award

Congratulations to the **LWV of Oak Park/River Forest** for Every Vote Counts! Their voter service efforts included registering 900 voters throughout the villages, working with other citizen groups, printing and distributing bookmarks, door hangers, and brochures.



### Membership Awards

Barb Marsh distributed the rebate incentive checks to local Leagues that met the membership challenge by reaching a net increase of at least 5%: **Adams County, Barrington, Chicago, Crystal Lake/Cary, Downers Grove/**

**Woodridge/Lisle, Elgin, Evanston, Greater Rockford, JoDavies County, Lake Forest/Lake Bluff, McLean County, Morgan County, Oak Park/River Forest, Rochelle Area, Wheaton, and Wilmette.** Chicago had the greatest increase in membership and received a silver tray. Representatives from Leagues with a membership increase were recognized and applauded for their success: Edwardsville, Greater Peoria, Highland Park, LaGrange Area, Palos/Oakland, and Park Ridge.

### Phonathon Awards

**Highland Park, Oak Park/River Forest, and Homewood/Flossmoor** received awards for the highest total donations as all exceeded \$5,000. Fifteen Leagues participated with 89 callers. There were rebates of 10, 15 and 20% of the donations raised and they ranged from \$73.50 to \$1,180.20.

President, Paula Lawson

Vice President for Issues/Action, Edith Auchter

Vice President Communications, Laurie Hugert

Vice President for Member Services, Sylvia Tillman

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Home Page <http://www.lwvil.org>

## LWVIL – OUR LEAGUE – NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!

It should not surprise you to learn that I have long held a vision for League...a vision that I have shared with you in not too subtle snippets over the last four years... a vision that has not yet been fulfilled.

We all believe that the cornerstone of League is our enthusiasm for citizen participation in government. How do we spread this enthusiasm? If you have read what I have been writing or heard me speak before, you know I have strong beliefs.



Barb Lippai  
Outgoing LWVIL President

- We must not rely on our highly respected candidates forums and voters guides to bring citizens to the polls, much less to League. Even though there is a correlation between registering to vote and voting, we do not reach enough non-registered citizens, nor can we keep voters coming back.
- We must make our education and advocacy work our fundamental work – the issues are so great today that we have a responsibility to live up to our foremothers' vision: they wanted women – today they would say voters – to cast an educated vote. "From the beginning, the League was an activist, grassroots organization whose leaders believed that citizens should play a critical role in advocacy. League members were encouraged to be political themselves, by educating citizens about, and lobbying for, government and social reform legislation."

If each local League and the state League encompass these complementary ideas, I believe we would develop into a stronger, more attractive organization.

I also strongly believe that we cannot return to the greatness that was once ours – greatness defined as citizens knowing what we do, what we stand for, and how we make a difference in our great nation – if we do not have adequate funding.

We need to do two things: First, each League member needs to pay her/his share. We did an academic exercise at our April Board meeting to determine how much "paying your share" meant: \$150.00. What is League's value to you? Each of us is trying to make a difference and that costs money. Why should a corporation support us if we don't support ourselves?

Second: Nobody joins League to raise money; unfortunately members think raising money is the Board's responsibility...but it is an every-member responsibility. You need to help the board raise corporate dollars: connections help, who do you know? What else can you do? Buy a ticket to the next fund raiser? Double your individual gift to League?

You may not agree with me— after all it is my vision – but I hope you agree that a vision is necessary to move forward. Seventy years before the suffragists won the right to vote they started with a vision. Eighty-five years ago Carrie Chapman Catt had a vision. Mine is certainly not on the same level as theirs, but nevertheless my vision provides one concept of what League could become.

Visions are important: they define where you are going and encourage people to go with you; they provide a roadmap to differentiate between the important stuff and the distractions that occur every day. Visions give you the energy to keep you and your cohorts moving toward your goal; they give direction; they give hope.

A vision is what League needs today – as in other times in our history. We have many challenges – we need to raise money, keep our membership growing, and educate the public on the key issues of the day. We need to assess League's value to our communities. There are two ways to look at these challenges ... you should choose to look at them as doable. Do not give in to nay saying, to negativism, to a defeatist attitude. If you can envision the solution, it can be achieved.

## EXPLORING THE NEED FOR A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

The Illinois Constitution of 1970 in Article XIV provides that citizens shall vote every twenty years on whether to hold a constitutional convention. The last proposal to hold a constitutional convention was defeated by the voters in 1988. Prior to the election of 1988, a civic group called the Committee of the Fifty studied the question of whether a constitutional convention should be called and concluded that one was not necessary at that time.

The issue is due to be put to the voters in 2008. The LWVIL will explore whether a constitutional convention is necessary in this decade. Some of the concerns expressed by local Leagues during program planning involve constitutional issues. Redistricting, death penalty, fiscal policy, school funding, home rule, county government, income taxes, and graduated income taxes are constitutional issues. These issues could be considered while studying the broader question: Does the Illinois Constitution still work effectively or does it need to be revised?

If you are interested in participating in this review process, contact Edith Auchter at 847-381-5760 or [auchfam@comcast.net](mailto:auchfam@comcast.net).

## Spotlight on Success 2005

Barb Marsh, VP of Member Service, moderated a panel of local Leagues presenting their spotlights on success during a Convention workshop.

### **Batavia: Anita Buchholz**

The Volunteer Fair was suggested by a 2002 LWVUS paper concerning the observance of 9/11 one year later in September 2002. The message invited citizens to renew democracy by volunteering in their communities. Barbara King planned the fair which has been held annually. Our 4th Volunteer Fair will be this September. Each year has attracted more groups and visitors. For more information: Barbara King (630)879-2263

### **McDonough County: Kathy Balderson**

McDonough County adopted a strategic plan whose #1 Goal was to increase membership. This was accomplished in various ways and proved to be very successful. For more information: Kathy Balderson (309)837-2240 or [K-Balderson@wiu.edu](mailto:K-Balderson@wiu.edu)

### **McLean County: Laurie Bergner**

"Our League had a large (20%) increase in membership this year. Our success can be attributed to the following: a great membership chair who made us all enthusiastic and responsible for increasing membership throughout the year; a visible campaign to help defeat an effort to put a 'revoke home rule' referendum on the ballot; and interesting programs that brought more people to our events." For more information: Laurie Bergner (309)454-3113 or [drlaurieb1@verizon.net](mailto:drlaurieb1@verizon.net)

### **Oak Park/River Forest: Priscilla Mims**

Biennially, the Oak Park/River Forest LWV holds a fundraising dinner prior to municipal elections. The local heads of government are invited to speak about the state of each village (this year Forest Park was also included); a keynote speaker is also invited. A total of almost \$7,500 was raised. This dinner also serves as a great community visibility event. For more information: Priscilla Mims (708) 524-1569 or [mimspa@aol.com](mailto:mimspa@aol.com)

### **Palos/Orland: Pat Eden**

The League of Women Voters of Palos/Orland traveled to Springfield in April of 2005 to participate in League Lobby Day. They dressed in period costume in honor of the 85th anniversary and traveled in a 1930 Ford. While in Springfield they did some lobbying that would have made Alice Paul proud. For more information: Pat Eden (708)448-9235 or [pateden03@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pateden03@sbcglobal.net)

### **Rochelle Area: Diane McNeilly**

Following a two-year study of city government, the League adopted a position to increase the size of the City Council. The LWV supported the very successful referendum (a 2-1 vote!) which greatly enhances community visibility. For more information: Diane McNeilly (815)562-5769 or [dianemcn@netzero.net](mailto:dianemcn@netzero.net)

### **Winnetka/Northfield/Kenilworth: Bernadette Wolff**

"Making Democracy Work: It's Up to All of Us" was a two-night workshop for junior and senior high school students on how to get involved in the democratic process. The first night was a panel of people who had experience communicating with elected representatives (e.g. a lobbyist, director of a think tank, member of a special interest group, and a private citizen). The second night, the panel consisted of elected representatives whom we hope to influence. For more information: Charlene Shryer (847)482-1356 or [shryer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shryer@sbcglobal.net)

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

The League of Women Voters of the Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect, Buffalo Grove Area celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary during its annual meeting on May 26, 2005. During the meeting, the League honored its founding president and first 50-year member, Joyce Marks. Joyce received a certificate of recognition from the League of Women Voters of the United States, a proclamation from the Village of Arlington Heights, and a plant for her garden from the LWVAHMPBG Area.

The event was well-attended with 25 or more members and more than fifteen guests including Joyce's daughter Peggy Kocin, son-in-law Gene Kocin, and granddaughter Julia Kocin. Many former members of the League were present including Jan Flapan, who serves on the LWVUS Board. The guest who came farthest was former LWVAHMPBG Area President Eloise Frye who now lives in Texas.



LWVAHMPBG Area President Robin LaBedz presenting a certificate from the LWVUS to Joyce Marks as Julia Kocin watches.

The event included having all present introduce themselves and speak about their involvement in or relationship to the League. It was very informative with several members noting membership in the League in other parts of the country. Many praised League for the opportunities it has provided and for what they had learned as a result of being part of the LWV. Another highlight was a display board that was a collaborative effort among Donna Ridge, Joyce Marks, and Pat Lindner that highlighted some of the history of the League.

## LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

### State Budget

In the final hours of session, the Illinois General Assembly passed SB 1548, which was the Fiscal Year 2006 State Budget with a total around \$55 billion. The bill was passed on a partisan roll call just before midnight that did not include any Republican votes. The budget was balanced on the highly controversial "Pension Holiday" which delays \$1.2 billion in payments owed to the state's five pension programs for teachers, state workers, and university employees. This means more borrowing in the future for the pensions that are already \$37 billion short. The budget approval was the work of the Democrats to the exclusion of all Republicans in the Illinois General Assembly. The approval of the budget averted another overtime session similar to the 54-day session last year that pulled the minority Republicans into the debate.

The budget for FY 2006 provides \$314 million more than the FY 2005 budget for elementary and high schools. The foundation level increases by \$200 per student which brings the new foundation level to \$5,164 per student. There were other increases for schools, but the twenty-year old special education formula will not be updated.

A pension reform bill, SB 27, will make changes to the Illinois Pension Code to reduce the portion of the pension liability for the state in addition to reducing the state's contributions. Other provisions will change the retirement incentives. The Governor signed the bill into law on June 1, 2005, and it is now Public Act 94-0004. In addition, the Governor's initiative to increase graduation requirements, SB 575, was passed without the proposed transition funding for those districts that do not meet the requirements, estimated at 83% of the districts in the State.

The legislature did not: eliminate the structural deficit, increase school spending to the levels recommended by the Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB), and continue with its planned catch-up on funding the underfunded pension plans. Instead, it chose to borrow money to pay for current spending.

### Election Laws

There are two Election Laws bills of special interest to the League currently in the General Assembly. Both bills deal with issues that have been addressed by the Election Administration Reform Committee as part of its long-time examination of election issues.

The first is HB 114 sponsored by Rep. Sara Feigenholtz. It amends the election code by specifying that confinement or detention in jail pending acquittal or conviction of a crime is not a disqualification for voting. It makes such confinement or detention a specified reason for absentee voting. While this legislation was in the House, the sponsor amended it to remove references to prisons. The amended bill has passed both houses and awaits the Governor's signature.

The second bill is HB 2532 introduced by Rep. Beth Coulson on February 18. It amends the election code to permit precinct poll watchers appointed by civic organizations based upon guidelines set by rule of the State Board of Elections. It requires that organizations must be certified bona fide by rule of the State Board of Elections.

Following its introduction, the bill went first to the House Rules Committee and then was assigned to the House Executive Committee on February 23. The bill remains in the House Executive Committee. The League was advised that the House leaders want more specific language used to define the civic organizations that may be permitted to poll watch. The League's Election Administration Reform Committee has been working on the language and will continue to promote this legislation.

### Mental Health

Mental Health Rally and Lobby Day in Springfield on May 3 drew 1,500 participants. Democratic Floor Leader Barbara Flynn-Currie, on behalf of the Speaker, stated the Speaker's continued support for a safe conversion process to a Recovery-based Fee for Service supported system. She was joined at the Rally by a bi-partisan group of representatives including Lee Daniels (R), David Leitch, (R), Patti Bellock (R), Kathy Ryg (D), and a host of Mental Health summit representatives.

HB 1345: Preserves money in mental health system when hospitals are closed/downsized. Passed both House and Senate and awaits the Governor's signature.

HB 59: Repeals sunset provision in mental health parity law along with HB 2190, which adds Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to the parity law, passed both chambers and is on its way to the Governor. This means that the existing law will continue in effect indefinitely.

### Death Penalty

The "no doubt" bill (HB 2704) passed the House, but failed to get out of committee in the Senate. Both friends and foes of the death penalty were conflicted on the merits of this legislation: friends, because this could be a de facto end of the death penalty; foes, because it could stall abolition legislation (de jure abolition). This legislation may be reintroduced.

Mattie Hunter introduced an abolition bill in the Senate (SB 2074). There are hearings planned for this summer, but a definite schedule has not yet been announced.

The Capital Punishment Reform Study Committee, created as part of the reforms passed by the General Assembly in late 2003, is finally up and running. LWVIL expects to testify when public testimony is sought.

### Children's Services

It was an exciting session for juvenile justice advocates. The League successfully supported a transfer initiative and measures regulating who is detained and where they may be

held. If the Governor signs the transfer bill (SB 283) as expected, it will increase the number of juveniles who are eligible for individualized review. This action follows the recent passage of reverse waiver legislation. Together, they mark progress in the League's long opposition to automatic transfer.

Two other measures will be taken up in the fall: SB 458 would raise the maximum age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18. Fall hearings have been promised. SB 92 (prior number HB 180, both shell bills) would remove the Juvenile Division from the Illinois Department of Corrections and place it into a separate department. Groups are expected to work out remaining concerns over the summer. Credit for success must be given to the Juvenile Justice Initiative, the League's collaborative partner.

### Gun Control

In the spring session, LWVIL supported legislation banning assault weapons and .50 caliber sniper rifles and ammunition; requiring those selling firearms in Illinois to be licensed; requiring mandatory trigger locks, and requiring background checks on gun sales at Illinois gun shows. Legislation pertaining to gun show sales providing that a person who desires to transfer or sell a firearm, who is not a federally licensed firearm dealer, at a gun show must request the Department of State Police to conduct a background check on the prospective recipient of the firearm was passed by both houses and sent to the Governor. The other legislation was not passed.

### Other

Legislation the League supported creating the Rental Housing Support Program Act (PA 94-0118) was signed by the Governor. This act provides for grants from the Illinois Housing Development Authority to provide subsidies for landlords to charge rent affordable for low-income tenants.

HB 672 legislation that would permit local home-rule municipalities to enact legislation stronger than the Illinois Clean Indoor Air Act, thereby enabling communities to enact local smoking bans, was supported by the League and passed by both houses.

Legislation to prohibit use of brominated fire retardants was supported by the League. The Governor signed the legislation, now PA 94-0100.

Thanks to our Issue Specialists for following legislation and preparing action alerts to members when it was appropriate to act on legislation. Specialists working on legislation mentioned in the preceding update were: **Chris Slowik, Kathryn Nesburg, Marcia McConnell, Mary-Lou Aagaard, Darlene Bakk, Janet Kittlaus, Eileen Subak, Cornelia Maude Spelman, Jan Kay, Claire Saford, and Rosemary Ashworth.**

## LWVIL IS ALL OF US WORKING TOGETHER

Convention was action-packed and stimulating with workshops, caucuses, and the main convention sessions all within two days. Like the first LWVIL Convention I attended, held at George Williams College Campus in Wisconsin because Illinois had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, I was awed by the enthusiasm and knowledge on the part of members and impressed with all the issues and activities in which local Leagues are engaged.

An ambitious agenda was set for the next two years.

In the issue and advocacy area, state committees will be working on:

Election Administration Reform helping to educate voters about changes in the voting process; the Democracy Project identifying areas in the state legislative process that could be reformed in order to strengthen citizen participation; Public Education and Social Services Funding by advocating for changes in the state revenue system; exploration of the need for a 2010 State Constitutional Convention in preparation for a question on the 2008 ballot; and, when funded, a study on Immigration in Illinois.

Committees will also be active in the areas of:

Voter Service, including support for local League candidate forums and Illinois Student Vote; Member Services, providing general support and advice for local Leagues; and Communications, working to increase League visibility in the public arena.

Members are especially invited to join a newly established Development Committee to think creatively about determining and planning fundraising events for the coming year to ensure the fiscal health of the League.

I encourage all members to get involved on the local and/or state level in your area of interest. Contact me or the LWVIL office staff to let us know the area in which you are interested in serving.

Thank you for the great honor of being elected president of an organization whose mission to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influence public policy through education and advocacy is timeless and necessary for democracy. I look forward to meeting and working with many of you. Feel free to contact me with suggestions, questions, or concerns.

Paula Lawson

plawson@lwwil.org



Barb Lippai congratulates incoming President Paula Lawson