Di Niesman and Laura Kratz: Issue Specialists

General Trends: Global
Nov. 2013 – The U.N. reported that CO2 pollution levels for 2012 were 393.3 ppm, well above the safe level of 350 ppm.
May 2015 – Eighteen months later, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that the global monthly average of carbon dioxide hit 400.83 parts per million, reaching levels that haven’t been seen in about 2 million years.
Whatever we are doing, as a planet, to mitigate the effects of climate change, it isn’t working too well. The amount of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere is rising too high and too fast. Climate change has a deleterious effect on land, sea and air.

General Trends: National
On July 18, 2013, Gina McCarthy was confirmed to direct the EPA
In April 2014, the Obama Administration delayed a decision on permitting the Keystone XL Pipeline, which LWVUS opposes, until after the November 2014 election. Keystone XL will bring toxic tar sand oil from Alberta to the U.S. Gulf. None of this oil will contribute to our country’s energy production; its only contribution will be to our air quality.
In January 2015, the 114th Congress got busy trying to unravel President Obama’s environmental legacy. They passed a bill requiring the President to permit the Keystone XL pipeline to go forward, knowing full well that the President would veto such a bill.

General Trends: Illinois
From October 2013 through November 2014, we observed the back and forth controversy over the building of the Illiana Tollway, called by many a boondoggle and opposed by environmental groups, in part, because it would go through the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Illiana would connect I-55 to I-65. In January 2015, Governor Rauner’s first Executive Order suspended any construction plans not already started, effectively halting the Illiana Tollway project for the time being.
May 2013, the General Assembly failed to pass a Renewable Portfolio Standards Fix.
May 2014, the General Assembly failed to pass an RPS Fix.
In February 2015, the US Department of Energy suspended the Future Gen “clean coal” project near Meredosia, IL because the company involved in the project did not raise their share of the funding by the required deadline.
As a result of the Obama Administration releasing to all 50 states goals for reducing carbon pollution, in January 2015, fifty-three members of the General Assembly signed on in support of the Illinois Clean Power Plan, which should effectively, if passed, give Illinois the long awaited, much needed RPS Fix.
As of May 2015, the Air Quality and Energy Issue Specialists were monitoring three pairs of legislation in the General Assembly: HB2607/SB1485 Renewable Resource Procurement (aka Clean Jobs Bill and supported by Clean Jobs Coalition), which is supported by LWVIL, as it creates jobs. The bills favoring nuclear power and heavily pushed by Excelon, HB3293/SB1585, only save jobs by not closing three nuclear power plants (if Illinois provides subsidies to keep them open). The final pair, HB3328/1879, are from ComEd. All three Senate bills have a status of “Rule 2-10 Committee/3rd Reading Deadline Established As May 15, 2015.”
League Actions

Di Niesman testified on November 8, 2013 in Chicago at the U.S. EPA “listening session” in support of strengthening carbon pollution standards for existing coal plants. Her testimony was at the behest of, and with the help of, the League of Women Voters of the United States.

In January/February 2015 LWVIL received a request from the Downers Grove League to sign on to a DuPage County resolution opposing a low/medium level nuclear waste facility proposal near Lake Huron. Although the proposed site is in Canada, the potential for contamination threatens all the Great Lakes and the communities that rely on them for drinking water. LWVIL, LWVUS and all Leagues in DuPage approved and local League testimony helped ensure that the resolution was passed by the full DuPage County Board. Opposition to the project is now part of the County’s legislative agenda in Washington.