

COMMUNICATIONS BIENNIUM REPORT: 2015-2017 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ILLINOIS

The newly formed Communications Committee has worked to improve communication to local leagues through social media, which includes the website, Constant Contact, Twitter and Facebook.

The Communication Committee updated the media list for major newspapers, television and radio. Updates included current contact person, updated phone numbers, email and twitter addresses. This updated list will be available for press releases and to use to publicize State League events.

The Communication Committee worked with an intern to create a new updated, fresh homepage look after review of other State LWV websites to capture the “best of the best” features. This new website homepage was launched in February 2017.

Monthly calendars with new content assigned to be posted every Monday and Thursday to the Homepage, Facebook and abbreviated posts on Twitter were established. Guidelines for writing the posts were developed based on Social Media best practices promulgated by LWV US. Board members and local league members volunteered to write this content in order to keep the website current.

We established a monthly monitor of Media metrics for volumes of activity to our Website, Constant Contact (e-news, leaders update, Time For Action) Twitter and Facebook distributing this data for Board review in the monthly Board meeting packets. Content was modified based on favorable numbers of “hits” on certain topics serving as a learning tool for contributing authors.

In an effort to highlight local league activities, each local league was scheduled to be spotlighted for a week on the website Homepage. In order to gather the information in a timely manner, reminders were sent to each local league 3-4 weeks before their scheduled posting. Most leagues were eager to share their accomplishments over the past year.

We developed a one year action plan for the communication committee and updated it quarterly.

Susan Kern
Michelle Peterson
LWVIL Communications Committee Co-Chairs

DEVELOPMENT BIENNIUM REPORT: 2015-2017 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ILLINOIS

Development (Sustainable Fundraising) is now a portfolio on the LWVIL Board. The Development Chair convenes a monthly phone conference for the standing Development Committee (DC).

The Development Committee (DC) takes responsibility for recruiting the chairs and committee members for the LWVIL regular fundraisers ((State of the State Luncheons and the Annual Appeal with Phonathon follow up.) The DC has also spearheaded efforts for a fundraising event to coincide with the 2018 LWVUS Convention to be held in Chicago (a performance by Second City).

As part of the board's strategic planning, the DC agreed on some basic principles for its component of the strategic plan:

1. The next three years leading up to the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the LWV presents a perfect opportunity to capitalize on our compelling story to engage the greater public in supporting our work. It should be a time to inspire our own members to consider increased or planned giving.
2. It is essential to reach out to and maintain relationships with our past presidents, past board members, and major donors (both member and nonmembers) to capitalize on their expertise, experience, and commitment to the LWV.
3. Although our organization is built on the dedication of volunteers, the ability to hire and adequately pay staff to ensure consistency, continuity, and depth of needed skills to advance our work is essential. Organizing and executing fundraising events and activities takes an enormous amount of time for our current staff. Being able to raise the funds to add a staff person to help coordinate these efforts and nurture relationships with our funders will have a "value added" component exceeding the cost of the position.
4. We need to see what resources the LWVUS may have for us in terms of development. Just as we look to the LWVUS for helpful resources, our local LWVs need to be able to look to LWVIL for help with development also.

In advancement of the above goals and principles, the DC has begun developing the components of a fundraising campaign to coincide with the lead up to the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the LWV. Through survey questions to the board, the campaign basics were determined. The goal is to raise an additional \$100,000 (minimum) in addition to our regular fundraisers by 2020. We believe that promoting the LWV throughout the state with a well-structured fundraising campaign can also lead to an increase in membership of at least 5% per year, strengthening our LWVs locally, statewide, and nationally.

Recent communications with the LWVUS through Kate Kennedy, Chief Development Officer, and Emily Yost, Development Manager, indicates that LWVUS and LWVIL will be working cooperatively in developing the materials for the campaign and in training board and campaign committee members in how to engage their communities in support of the campaign. For example, Kate offered to provide training in "making the ask" with major donors.

With the groundwork laid by the 2015-2017 board, the 2017-2019 board with the guidance of the DC will pursue these goals:

1. *Development of the 100th Anniversary fundraising campaign case statement to include:*
 - a. *The inspirational story of our founder's dream of a political process that is rational and issue-oriented, one dominated by citizens not politicians, and a League devoted to issues and placing what it considers the public interest over partisan politics.*
 - b. *Selling the logical idea that supporting the LWV can make a difference and sharing how we do it.*
 - c. *Selling the idea that our model of citizenship is essential to "making democracy work."*

2. *Development of the campaign tools and materials such as:*
 - a. *Introductory 15-minute Power Point slide show with voice-over developed to address the particular audience or demographic that we are trying to reach.*
 - b. *Print piece with attractive graphics, info on how to contribute, etc.*
 - c. *Digital components for our own websites, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, Instagram, etc.*
 - d. *Campaign “display” piece related to showing progress in reaching our \$100,000 goal. (Instead of campaign “thermometer,” use of a “fill in” chart for each year 1920 to 2020 with \$1000.00 gifts that commemorate an event or person.”*
 - e. *A campaign “tool kit” with the above pieces plus videotaped training on how to make the ask.*
 - f. *Training for our members “making the ask.”*

3. *Sharing with our local LWVs the materials, tools, and training*

A big “thank you” goes to these Development Committee members: Sharon Alter, Erin Roeper, Nancy Clark, and Mary Cay Murray.

Bonnie Cox
LWVIL Development Committee Chair

ISSUES BIENNIUM REPORT: 2015-2017 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ILLINOIS

Delegates to the 2015 LWVIL Convention reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening the democratic process by educating members and the public on issues, promoting civic participation, and encouraging public policy outcomes consistent with its positions on issues.

At the convention, a position permitting analysis of Governmental Consolidation was adopted by concurrence.

In 2015, delegates adopted a program that included five Action Foci: 1) Fiscal policy – with a focus on education and social needs, 2) Redistricting, 3) Gun Violence Prevention, 4) Water – with a focus on nutrient loss, and 5) Criminalization of mental illness

LEAGUE IMPACT - OUR ACTION FOCI

ACTION FOCUS: FISCAL POLICY AND TAX REFORM Coordinator: Kathy Nesburg

The budget impasse between the Governor and the General Assembly continues to harm Illinois citizens. Students attending kindergarten through 12th grade and the state's community colleges and universities suffer from inadequate funding and cuts to their resources. Their communities, their teachers and other school employees also are hurt by the failure to adequately fund schools, colleges and universities. Social services have been cut by \$2 billion because funds have not been appropriated for them. Medical providers including doctors, dentists, hospitals, nursing homes, and pharmacies have not been paid for

their services. Bond rating agencies continue to lower their ratings of the state's ability to pay its debts, which increases the interest payments the state must make on its debt obligations.

Illinois continues to have a structural deficit: its revenue system does not raise enough money to pay for the services that it provides. The state continues to reduce services which hurts its neediest citizens. Illinois has relied on borrowing for so long that debt and interest payments make up approximately 25% of the General Fund budget.

To raise revenues, the League recommends that Illinois:

- Raise income tax rates
- Expand the sales tax to include more services
- Tax retirement income
- Impose a tax on financial transactions
- Pass a constitutional amendment to allow for graduated rates for the income tax
- NOT freeze property taxes. Freezing property taxes would harm school districts and other local governments.

League Activity during the 2015-2017 Biennium.

- October 2015. LWVIL joined other non-partisan civic organizations to publish a letter in the Chicago Tribune asking the Governor and legislative leaders to meet to discuss the budget impasse. A meeting was scheduled but the attendees did not agree on a budget.
- April 2016. TFA supporting a Constitutional Amendment for a graduated rate income tax.
- April 2016. TFA supporting a budget bill to fund social services.
- May 2016. TFA supporting a Constitutional Amendment for a graduated rate income tax. The bill did not pass. LWVIL also requested adequate revenues and fairness and no more budget cuts. League lobbied in Springfield and prepared Letter to the Editor templates for Local Leagues.
- TFA opposing freeze on property taxes. The bill did not advance.
- June 2016. TFA requesting that the Governor and the General Assembly pass a fully funded budget by June 30. A partial budget passed.
- October 19, 2016. LWVIL President Mary Kubasak sent a letter to League members and the media opposing the proposed amendment to the Illinois Constitution known as the Transportation Lockbox Amendment. The amendment passed in the November 2016 General Election.
- Hilary Denk wrote a chapter for *Chicago is not Broke*, published in July of 2016, explaining why the League supports a progressive income tax. Subsequently, she has presented at over 25 community events, primarily in Chicago, but also in the suburbs, including several League events. The book was sold at state and Chicago League events throughout the year.
- March 2017. TFA requesting that the Senate pass a budget. The Senate was discussing “a grand bargain”.
- Questions regarding fiscal policy were contributed to the questions for Legislative interviews and Candidate Forums. A video on the budget impasse was made and placed on LWVIL's web page.
- LWVIL is a member of the Responsible Budget coalition which advocates for a fully funded budget with new revenue that invests in Illinois' children, families and communities.

ACTION FOCUS: REDISTRICTING REFORM Coordinator: Paula Lawson

Independent Map Amendment – Ballot Initiative for 2016

The LWVIL supported efforts to place the Independent Redistricting Amendment initiated in April 2015 on the November 2016 General Election Ballot. The proposed amendment to Article IV, Section 3 of the Illinois Constitution would have changed the way the Illinois General Assembly (ILGA) House and Senate districts are drawn after the US Census by providing for an independent commission to draw the maps. This was the third attempt to place a Citizens Initiative on the ballot to change the redistricting process for the ILGA after Fair Maps in 2010 and Yes for Independent Maps in 2014.

LWVIL Redistricting Campaign Efforts included:

- Announcing LWVIL support of the Independent Map Amendment on April 28, 2015
- Having the LWVIL President serve as a member of the Board for this ballot initiative.
- Formally kicking off the ballot initiative campaign for LWVIL at the June 2015 convention by
 - Providing a campaign tool kit
 - Presenting strategy for local League campaign participation at the Plenary and in Caucuses
- Participation by local Leagues in
 - Collecting petition signatures
 - Holding public meetings on the current redistricting process and the proposed amendment
 - Presenting programs to students in high school civics classes
- Conducting a workshop, *Persuading the Public that the Amendment Will Make a Difference*, at the February 2016 Issues Briefing
- Gearing up for educating the public on the Independent Map Amendment by having the LWVIL Redistricting Steering Committee develop and provide resources for local Leagues
- Joining in the filing of an amicus on July 28, 2016 to the Illinois Supreme Court
- Participating in press conferences

A campaign called *Independent Maps* providing for an Independent Commission to draw state legislative maps was the most recent attempt to get a redistricting amendment on the ballot. The Independent Maps Board was bipartisan and had a broad range of representation from non-profits and the business community.

On May 6, 2016 the bipartisan *Independent Maps* coalition submitted over 570,000 petition signatures to the Illinois State Board of Elections. The ISBE sampling of signatures, found a 73% validity rate – well in excess of the 290,199 signatures required to place the amendment on the November 8th ballot.

A lawsuit the People’s Map V. The Illinois State Board of Elections was filed and heard by Cook County Circuit Court Judge Diane Larson. On July 18, 2006 Judge Larsen handed down a ruling that the Independent Map Amendment was unconstitutional.

Independent Maps filed an appeal directly to the Illinois Supreme Court. On July 28th LWVIL as part of a coalition filed an amicus with the Illinois Supreme Court urging it “to allow democracy to prevail and to let the people have their vote” on the amendment. Independent Maps final brief to the Court on August 9th argued that the lower court ruling if not reversed “would eviscerate the constitutional right conferred on the people of Illinois by the 1970 constitution to bypass self-interested legislators and directly propose needed reforms.”

The Independent Map Amendment did not appear on the November 8, 2016 Election Ballot. On Thursday, August 25th the Illinois Supreme Court ruled 4 to 3 affirming the Cook County Circuit Court

decision that the proposed amendment failed to meet constitutional requirements. The decision split along party lines.

The Court decision rested on the fact that the job duties of the Auditor General are not stated in Article IV Section 3, the Legislative Article, of the Illinois Constitution. Therefore the proposal was a violation of provision for Constitutional Initiative that limits amendments to structural and procedural subjects contained in Article IV. The Court only ruled on one of the seven counts objecting to the proposed amendment.

Future Efforts: The Independent Maps Board decided not to pursue another citizen initiative. The limited court ruling makes it difficult to pursue another attempt. LWVIL is participating in the IL Redistricting Collaborative. Working for fair and responsible redistricting, this group will produce: 1. A comprehensive report on the 2016 campaign effort, 2. A set of values and principles to guide the next steps in the process, and 3. A set of strategies to move forward in the lead up to redistricting in 2021.

ACTION FOCUS: GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION *Coordinators: Barbara Marsh and Mary Klonowski*

LWVIL continues to be a member of Illinois Coalition Against Handgun Violence (ICHV). The coalition is composed of many anti-gun violence groups, agencies, and religious organizations.

For the past two years, the League has been working with the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence to advocate for a state law that would require the licensing of gun dealers. At present there is not a state law, only a federal licensing law monitored by Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF) which is checked approximately every 10 years.

Time for Action: Over the past two years, LWVIL issued 5 TFA's related to a Lethal Violence Protection for Family members and to Gun Dealer Licensing.

ACTION FOCUS: WATER *Coordinator: Krista Grimm*

League Activity

During the past biennium, LWVIL Ed Fund (LWVILEF) carried out clean water education projects, often working with local Leagues. Through the 2016 "Rooting for Clean Water" program funded by an Illinois Coastal Management Grant, materials on the role of native plants in helping to clean water were created. Approximately 1000 flyers and 100 bumper stickers were distributed to local Leagues, members, and others along the Lake Michigan coast. A very successful workshop was held in August, 2016 with a bus tour of a Wilmette prairie and several home landscapes to learn how to use native plants. Hundreds of additional materials provided by the LWV Lake Michigan Region, our collaborator in this project, were distributed to and through Illinois Leagues outside of the coastal area. A PowerPoint presentation remains available to garden clubs and other groups that would like to learn about native plants' role as nature's water treatment plants.

The LWVILEF acquired two watershed demonstration models with funding through a second IL Department of Natural Resources grant. Seventeen volunteers were trained to use the models to demonstrate watershed dynamics and sources of water pollution. The model has been and will continue to be used for public outreach and community events throughout 2017.

LWVIL has worked toward banning coal tar sealants, a source of water pollution. Organic compounds in these sealants are harmful to human, animal, and aquatic ecosystem health. The League supported legislation that would ban these substances statewide for the past three years. Local Leagues in home rule municipalities are supporting local bans and this work is ongoing. Amendment 2 to HB 2958 would allow non-home rule communities (most with fewer than 25,000 population) to pass bans as well. Congratulations are due to the LWV of Wilmette for successfully advocating for its Village ban of coal tar sealants.

Legislative Activity:

- Asked LWVUS to sign on to a letter requesting continued Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding in July, 2015
- Issued a TFA requesting calls to Senator Kirk to express disappointment with his co-sponsorship of a bill that would weaken the Clean Water Act in November, 2015.
- Submitted comments on the proposed Total Maximum Daily Load standards for Mercury and PCBs in Lake Michigan Nearshore Waters to the Illinois EPA in February, 2016. Very significant reductions of both pollutants are required to meet federal water quality standards. League comments emphasized that a strong implementation plan is needed, and that the Waukegan Generating Station and coal-fired power plants in neighboring states create air pollution that must also be addressed to achieve healthier water.
- Asked local Leagues to request that their state legislators co-sponsor a bill banning coal tar sealants in 2016 Legislative Interviews. Several Leagues reported that their legislators asked for more information. LWVIL President Mary Kubasak responded directly with follow-up letters to the legislators.
- Testified on behalf of the Cook County League in favor of an Ordinance creating a safe Pharmaceutical Disposal program for the county. An amended version passed on October 26, 2016.
- TFA issued requesting comments to the Canadian Minister of Environment and Climate Change expressing strong opposition to the proposed Ontario Power Generation nuclear waste repository near the coast of Lake Huron.
- The Trump Administration proposed cutting \$50 million from previously approved FY2017 funding for the GLRI, and eliminating the program for FY2018. A TFA was issued in March, 2017, asking members to call their federal legislators to restore funding. In April, 2017, a Letter to the Editor template supporting the GLRI was sent to local Leagues. Thanks to public outcry, legislators from both parties agreed to support the GLRI and full FY2017 funding was restored. LWVIL will continue to monitor budget negotiations for FY2018.
- TFA issued requesting members submit witness slips for HB 2958 Amendment 1, which would create a statewide ban on Coal Tar Sealants, in March, 2017. A template for a Letter to the Editor supporting the bill and educating the public about the threats of coal tar sealant was provided to local Leagues as well.

Outlook

Advocacy will continue on measures to prevent coal tar pollution. Support for the current state bill will continue. Local Leagues are continuing advocacy in their communities for local bans.

A 2016 state law will help to determine lead levels in drinking water in Illinois. It requires water testing at schools and daycare facilities and also requires mapping of service pipes that may be at risk of leaching lead. LWVIL will monitor implementation and effectiveness of this program.

Many federal issues will require ongoing monitoring and responsive advocacy. The US EPA is considering taking action against the purported “most burdensome” regulations and the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) is at risk. Cuts in funding for the EPA, which administers the CWA, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and other federal water protection programs, have been threatened. The proposed relocation of the Region 5 US EPA offices from Chicago to Kansas will cause an enormous loss of jobs in Illinois and weaken the agency’s ability to oversee environmental protection in the Midwest.

ACTION FOCUS: CRIMINALIZATION OF MENTAL ILLNESS

2016 Issues Briefing Plenary – The Outlook for Criminal Justice Reform in Illinois, with Roger Heaton and John Maki from the Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform in Illinois

2016 Issues Briefing Breakout Session – Effects of Mental Health Problems on Prisoners in Illinois with Jennifer Vollen-Katz and Gwyneth Troyer

Legislation progressing through the legislature in 2017 provides for Crisis Intervention Training for probation officers (HB0375) and adds postpartum mental illness to the list of issues which can be used to reduce a criminal sentence (HB1764).

LEAGUE IMPACT: OTHER ISSUES
REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

CAMPAIGN FINANCE
Paula Lawson

Legislative Trends:

Legislation on the State Level has mainly focused on shoring up loopholes in reporting of campaign spending and campaign contributions.

There is also interest in passing Fair Election Guidelines and in creating Small Donor Campaign Matching Systems both at the state level and for municipalities.

League Actions:

March 2017

- Signed Witness Slip supporting SB1424. This bill, the Small Donor Democracy Matching System for Fair Elections Act, creates a small donor campaign contribution matching system for candidates for the offices of Governor, Attorney General, State Comptroller, State Treasurer, Secretary of State, State Senator, and State Representative.
- Signed Witness Slip supporting SB2089. This Bill closes a loophole in the Election Code. It requires tax-exempt 501(c)(4), 501(c)(5) and 501(c)(6) organizations, under the federal Internal Revenue Code defined as political action committees, ballot initiative committees and independent expenditure committees who make contributions to candidates to report their donors.

May 2015

- Sent TFA supporting SB248. This bill closed a reporting gap and increased the frequency of reporting requirements for independent expenditures related to campaigns. The legislation, PA99-0437 ,was signed by the Governor on August 21, 2015

Following a national study the LWVUS in April 2016 adopted an updated position on Money in Politics, <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/lwvus-position-money-politics>, making League better able to respond to current campaign finance issues.

ELECTION LAWS: AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION IN ILLINOIS

Sharon Alter

Since fall 2015, LWVIL has been an active member of the Just Democracy coalition in support of automatic voter registration in Illinois. In spring 2016, SB250, with LWVIL support, passed in both the Illinois House and Illinois Senate with bipartisan support, but was successfully vetoed by Governor Rauner.

In the spring 2017 session of the Illinois General Assembly, SB1933 was introduced in the Illinois Senate. This bill incorporates legislative language to provide solutions to a number of the Governor's objections in his 2016 veto message. LWVIL issued TFAs asking Leaguers to contact their Illinois Senators for support. By May 15, 2017, SB1933 passed the Illinois Senate with bipartisan support and is now in the Illinois House. LWVIL will continue its 2017 lobbying efforts so that, hopefully, both the Illinois House votes favorably and the Illinois Governor signs the bill into law.

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES

Janet Craft and Margaret O'Hara

Supreme Court Cases

Whole Women's Health v. Cole challenged a Texas law imposing new medical regulations on abortion clinics. In June 2016 the Court ruled 5-3 that Texas cannot place restrictions on the delivery of abortion services that create an undue burden for women seeking an abortion.

Zubik et al. v. Burwell. A group of religious non-profits challenged the HHS accommodation to exempt them from providing contraception in employee health insurance benefits. The 4-4 divided court initially instructed the opponents to negotiate a solution, in May 2016 the case was returned to lower courts for resolution.

League Activity:

2015

SB1564 Healthcare Right of Conscience Act amends Illinois Health Care Right of Conscience Act to ensure a patient's right to medically accurate and complete information. TFA sent in support. Passed by Senate 4/22/15; final action 2016, signed into law 7/2016.

2016

HB5576 Contraceptive Coverage Act TFA sent in support Signed into law 7/2016.

LWVIL opposed the following bills, similar to others filed in previous years. None came to a vote.

HB3274 ASTC - Pregnancy Termination Centers requires facilities where 50 or more abortions a year are performed to be licensed as Pregnancy Termination Centers, with standards more applicable to Ambulatory Care Centers.

HB 2701 Ultrasound Opportunity Act requires an ultrasound and waiting period before a surgical or medication abortion, irrespective of medical judgment. Data on abortions are filed without assurance of confidentiality

2017

Reproductive Health and Access Coalition conference call 2/1/17 by ACLU to discuss ways to preserve Reproductive Rights knowing a socially conservative judge was confirmed for vacancy on the Supreme Court, and request support for **ILHB40**.

HB40 Abortion Various -Removes a trigger in 1975 Illinois Abortion law, and allows abortion funding for Medicaid and state employees. LWVIL sent a proponent witness slip, and TFA to

support. On 4/25/17 the bill passed the House. On 5/10/17, it passed the Senate. However, on April 14th Governor Rauner's office announced he will veto the bill if it would pass, he supports abortion rights but not public funding for abortion. LWVIL sent TFA to contact the Governor to reconsider.

Outlook:

- With an apparently Conservative leaning majority in the Supreme Court, future challenges to **Roe v Wade**, may be likely. Question if there will be restrictions on contraceptive coverage, in any bills to repeal the ACA.
- Work with Reproductive Health and Access Coalition to monitor and advocate for issues concerning Roe v Wade and funding for abortion.
- Expect continued efforts to restrict abortion in Illinois

**NATURAL RESOURCES
CLIMATE CHANGE - AIR QUALITY AND ENERGY
Di Niesman and Laura Kratz**

Global Trends:

- Atmospheric CO2 remained above 400 parts per million throughout 2016. (Normally there is a drop in September after summer plant growth in the northern hemisphere temporarily sucks CO2 from the atmosphere; it rises again in the fall when plants decompose.)
- 2016 marked the third year in a row where average global temperatures have set new record highs.

Federal:

- The United States ratified the Paris Climate Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- The Obama administration and the federal EPA initiated a national Clean Power Plan.
- The new administration took office in January 2017 and immediately began issuing Executive Orders to review federal government regulations. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Power Plan are specifically targeted to be suspended, revised or rescinded.

Illinois:

- The legislature passed, and the Governor signed the Clean Jobs Bill, Illinois' framework for meeting requirements of the federal EPA's Clean Power Plan, including setting high energy efficiency standards "fixing" the renewable portfolio standard, and allowing net metering that makes it possible for a wide range of communities to participate in a clean energy future.

League Action since the 2015 Convention:

- 2015-16 LWVIL supported the Illinois Clean Jobs Bill and joined the Clean Jobs Coalition.
- November 2015 - TFA asking Senator Mark Kirk to oppose a Congressional Review Act resolution that would have blocked the federal Clean Power Plan
- February 2016 - TFA and letter asking Ontario Canada to deny a permit for an underground nuclear waste storage facility near Lake Huron,
- November 2016 - TFA urging support for specific components of the Clean Jobs Bill (a compromise bill) during the Veto Session.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD & WATER

Sheri Latash

General Legislative Trends

Federal: Most policies related to agriculture, food, and the waters used and affected by agriculture & food production, are set at the federal level. Though LWVUS adopted an updated agriculture position in 2014, this is not a priority issue for the national League. Thus, in 2015 LWVIL sought approval from LWVUS to join two national coalitions whose work is consistent with our positions, and who engage in Congressional and regulatory agencies advocacy; in October 2015 LWVUS refused permission. As a result, we have only monitored federal developments, not taken action on them.

Consistent with our agriculture position supporting more informative and standardized definitions on food product labels, several recent developments are worth noting:

- (1) In 2016 President Obama signed a law requiring the labeling of genetically modified foods or foods containing such ingredients. Companies will be required to disclose the presence of GMO ingredients through text labels, symbols, or digital links, such as scannable QR codes. The Agriculture Secretary is to determine the amounts of such substances that may be present in food before triggering the labeling and has up to two years to develop the regulations;
- (2) Also in 2016, the Nutrition Facts Label on packaged goods was revised to be more useful to consumers trying to make informed food choices;
- (3) Menu labeling regulations which were scheduled to take effect in May 2017 for restaurant chains and other food retailers, have now been extended to May 2018 due to President Trump's regulatory pushback.

Consumers also lost their ability to make informed choices about the source of their meat purchases in December 2015. Congress was forced to repeal the Country of Origin Labeling Law ("COOL") as it applies to identifying the source of beef & pork on the package. The repeal was in response to a multiyear trade dispute with Canada and Mexico, in which the World Trade Organization ruled against the U.S. multiple times.

State: On food/agriculture issues, the past two years have seen (1) legislative expansion in defining "cottage foods" that can be prepared in home kitchens and sold in farmers' markets; (2) an amendment to the seed-banking law, now guaranteeing the free exchange and preservation of open pollinated, public domain plant varieties by non-profit, governmental, and cooperative organizations; (3) a major change in Illinois's-Operative Act, now allowing small-scale farmers and food processors to form co-operatives; (4) Governor Rauner's authorization of a \$500,000 appropriation to provide matching dollars to SNAP recipients to purchase additional fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets.

Regarding actions related to protection of agricultural water resources...(1) effective in 2017, farmers can obtain a property tax exemption if they install filter strips, designed to mitigate the runoff of fertilizers and soil into the waterways; (2) Following unsuccessful efforts at the regulatory level during 2013-2015 rulemaking on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), opponents of large-scale livestock facilities continue to seek legislative changes to the Illinois' Livestock Management Facilities Act, specifically to require Illinois EPA's creation of a statewide CAFO inventory, and a requirement to prepare waste management plans.

League Actions since the 2015 Convention

The work of the Upper Mississippi River Region (UMRR) InterLeague Organization has been the major focus on the sustainable water front since UMRR's launch in October 2015. An initiative begun by the Jo Daviess County League, UMRR has 60+ Leagues from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin supporting efforts to reduce nutrients (nitrogen & phosphorus) going into our waterways. Those nutrients in our tributaries that feed the Mississippi River have created the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Through a partnership with Rotary International, and with funding from other non-profit organizations, UMRR is engaging in watershed education throughout the region. It joins its sister organization, LWV Lake Michigan Region, in this mission.

SOCIAL POLICIES

CRIMINAL JUSTICE, JUVENILE JUSTICE, AND DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION

Janet Kittlaus

Criminal Justice Legislation Adopted since 2015 Convention:

PA99-0378, PA99-0381, PA99-0574, PA99-0835, and PA99-0881 expanded expungement or sealing opportunities;

PA99-0628 and PA 99-0697 decriminalized or reclassified some offenses to reduce sentences;

PA 99-0667, PA99-0872, PA99-0876, PA99-0884, PA99-0886 eased or removed employment barriers to people with records;

PA99-0698 eased penalties for certain parole violations;

PA99-0861 requires judges to justify sentencing someone to prison for a low-level felony;

PA99-0871 requires that defendants be fully informed of the consequences of pleading guilty;

PA99-0907 provides returning citizens with state-IDs, making reentry into society easier;

PA99-0938 liberalizes supplemental (earned) sentence credit and allows the imposition of a probation sentence in certain drug-related cases.

Legislation that the League supported with TFA and/or witness slips:

HB3149 (PA99-0378); HB3475 (PA99-0381); HB4360 (PA99-0667); HB4515 (PA99-0872); HB5973 (PA99-0876); SB42 (PA99-0886); SB3005 (PA99-0884).

SB2465 would have barred Illinois from seeking reimbursement for incarceration costs from returning citizens but the Governor's amendatory veto killed the bill

Legislation pending in 2017 provides:

- re-entry assistance and employment opportunities (HB514, HB2373, HB3142, HB3342, SB1688, SB1781, SB1782, SB2053);
- Crisis Intervention Training for probation officers (HB0375);
- that inmates may be resentenced if the penalty for their crime has changed (HB1804);
- for the abolition of cash bail (SB552);
- for the reforming of the Civil Asset Forfeiture Law (HB0689/SB1578);
- the creation of a Women's Correctional Services Division in DOC (HB3904);
- for changing the offense of unlawful contact with street gang members to unlawful participation in street gang related activity, a Class A misdemeanor (HB3803).

Legislation that the League is supporting:

- HB3342, SB1688, SB2053 all expand licensing opportunities.
- HB3355 Amendment 1 is an omnibus bill which would address a number of the most difficult recommendations in the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform

report. For this reason, enacting all of these reforms is unlikely in this session, but advocates hope to salvage some of these recommendations in smaller bills.

- Witness slips were filed for:
HB689/SB1578 (Civil Asset Forfeiture Law Reform);
HB2373 (expands record sealing eligibility);
HB3142 (prohibits colleges from asking about criminal record during admission).

The League opposes SB1722 passed by the Senate, which was stripped of reform provisions, leaving a “presumptive minimum” sentencing scheme for “repeat gun offenders,” which advocates oppose because it infringes upon judicial discretion.

Juvenile Justice Legislation Adopted since 2015 Convention:

PA99-0069 Mandatory life without parole was ended for minors in adult court.

PA99-0254 Juveniles under 13 cannot be detained in a detention facility unless a local youth service provider is unable to accept the child.

PA99-0258 The automatic transfer of children under 15 to adult court has ended, and juvenile court judges now make the transfer decision for children ages 16 and 17--but, automatic transfer for some children 16 and 17 still is in place.

PA99-0268 The incarceration of children for misdemeanors and for status offenses was ended, and aftercare (parole) requires set terms that cannot be longer than adult parole terms.

PA99-0628 Certain crimes such as property damage, disorderly conduct and obstructing justice are reclassified as misdemeanors if committed by people under 18.

PA 99-0835 In certain cases, people are allowed to petition for the expungement of law enforcement and juvenile court orders if they were arrested, charged or adjudicated delinquent for an incident that occurred before their 18th birthday and would have been an offense if committed by an adult.

PA99-0879 With certain exceptions, children cannot be incarcerated for offenses that are Class 3 or 4 felony violations of the Illinois Controlled Substances Act. Probation terms for children found guilty of first degree murder, Class X, and forcible felonies were modified.

PA 99-0881 A person with a conviction history is no longer precluded from expunging a new arrest that didn't lead to a conviction.

PA99-0882 Legal representation for children up to age 15 now is required during interrogation in murder and sex offenses, videotaping of interrogations to all felonies and some misdemeanor offenses is expanded, and now required is a modified version of the Miranda warning for children.

PA99-0894 The Mental Health Opportunities for Youth Diversion Task Force was created in order to create a plan to divert youth into the appropriate health care setting rather than initial or further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Legislation that the League supported with TFA and/or witness slips:

HB3718 (PA99-0258), HB6291 (PA99-0879), HB6328 (PA99-0881), SB2370 (PA 99-0882), SB0320 (PA99-0894).

President Mary Kubasak wrote to the Governor urging him to sign juvenile justice bills HB2567, HB3718, and SB1560 which became PA99-0254, PA99-0258, and PA99-0268.

The Illinois Supreme Court has banned the shackling of juveniles during court proceedings unless, in a separate hearing, shackling is deemed necessary.

Pending legislation In 2017

- providing Crisis Intervention Training for probation officers (HB0375);
- providing training for juvenile personnel (HB3165);
- creating a new process for juveniles sentenced in adult court (SB2073);
- expanding automatic expungement and strengthens confidentiality of juveniles records (HB3817/SB2021);
- forbidding detention or criminal processing on school grounds (HB3903)

Legislation that the League is supporting

- HB3817/SB2021

Death Penalty Abolition

The League was an active participant in the efforts during 2010 to abolish the death penalty. This goal was achieved in early 2011 when legislation passed the House on January 6, the Senate on January 11 and signed into law on March 9. The League will continue to monitor any attempts to reinstate capital punishment.

EDUCATION FUNDING **Claire McIntyre and Jean Pierce**

General Legislative Trends:

- Despite the two year state budget impasse, education is one of the few discretionary line items in the budget with continued funding in both FY 16 and FY 17. Nevertheless, the state is currently \$1 billion behind in mandated grant payments
- Numerous school districts in the state joined together to sue the Governor and ISBE, alleging that the state has violated constitutional rights to state funding of learning standards, to equal protection, and to due process.
- Every year there have been proposals to freeze property taxes. In 2017, the governor recommended a permanent property tax freeze as part of his bargain to sign a budget. School district personnel have indicated extreme concern.
- An advisory committee was appointed by the Governor to examine school funding reform. In February, 2017, it reported that an evidence-based funding model has promise for more equitable funding. HB 2808 (Davis), and SB 1124 SAM 1 (Barickman) address the need for an evidenced based funding model.

League Actions since the 2015 Convention

- Fall, 2015: TFA, video, Letters to editors, etc. regarding the need to resolve the budget impasse in order to achieve adequate funding
- Feb., 2016:
 - TFA opposing the plan to use special education funds to equalize educational funding – the plan was dropped
 - Letter to Representative Mayfield opposing HB4424 – mandatory retention for third graders not reading at grade level by the end of the year.
 - Witness slip with written testimony plus letters to Senator Cullerton and Rep. Flynn-Currie opposing HB4263, property tax cap. Stalled in committee.
 - Letters to Governor and to ISBE opposing the use of federal grant funds to open 48 additional charter schools. The funds were accepted for that purpose.
 - TFA supporting including educators on the ISBE Board. Did not pass.
- Apr., 2016:

- TFA opposing increasing the length of time for charter school renewals from 5-10 years. The bill was signed into law.
- TFA supporting Constitutional Amendment for graduated rate income tax. Did not pass.
- May, 2016:
 - TFA opposing a freeze on property taxes. Did not pass.
 - Witness slip supporting preventing Charter School Commission from overriding district decision. Did not pass.
- June, 2016: TFA supporting passing a fully-funded state budget by June 30. Instead, a 6-month stop-gap budget was passed.
- Jan-Feb. 2017: Opposed voucher schools through a letter and witness slips
- April, 2017:
 - TFA supporting preventing the Charter School Commission from reversing local school board decisions.
 - TFA supporting Civic Education in Middle School
 - TFA supporting preventing new charter schools from being approved in neighborhoods where traditional public schools were closed recently
 - TFA supporting preventing the misuse of federal funds designed for the classroom.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (ERA)

Sharon Alter

In February 2017, SJRCA0004 was introduced in the Illinois Senate for Illinois to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). LWVIL supports ratification and issued a Time for Action asking Leaguers to file witness slips in support of passage by Illinois Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments. Originating with my email message recommendation, LWVIL Board member/Issues Co-Chair Hilary Denk testified before the Subcommittee and passage did occur. After then passing the Illinois Senate Executive Committee with bipartisan support, SJRCA0004 is now to be voted on in the Illinois Senate. LWVIL will continue its lobbying efforts, especially now that Nevada in March 2017 became the 36th ERA ratifying state out of the required 38 states needed for ratification.

SJRCA0004 requires a 3/5 majority in both the Illinois Senate and the Illinois House for Illinois to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.

HEALTH CARE

Margaret O'Hara & Janet Craft

By 2015 the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) led to a 44% reduction of uninsured Illinois citizens, but by 2016 applicants for Marketplace plans found higher premiums, and less choice. Risk adjustment strategies in the Affordable Care Act to provide stability, compensating for the enrollment of less healthy individuals did not meet the goal following congressional changes to the program.

In June 2015 the Supreme Court cleared the way for tax subsidies to continue through both federal and state exchanges. 78% of Illinois enrollees in an ACA plan were eligible for a subsidy to cover the premium cost.

The new Governor's proposed 2015 budget cut Medicaid by \$1.5 billion. Two years later there is no fiscal year budget.

On May 4, 2017 the U.S. House passed the, hastily prepared, American Health Care Act (AHCA), by 2 votes. This bill must still go to the Senate where both Senators and Representatives agree it will require extensive revision to pass out of the Senate.

League Activity:

2015

- Final effort in 2015 veto session by LWVIL and coalition partners to pass enabling legislation for a state Health Insurance Exchange unsuccessful.

2016

- In mid-December 2016 joined with our HealthCare coalition partners and sent a letter urging Governor Rauner to tell Congress not to repeal the ACA, in part or in whole, without any adequate replacement plan, which should include Medicaid expansion.

2017

- In January 2017 joined Protect Our Care Illinois Coalition (PoCIL), to advocate for no repeal of the ACA without an adequate replacement.
- Organized Q and A Forums in the 14th District (Hultgren) and 16th (Kinzinger) two of the US Representatives who have supported repeal and replace of the ACA.

Outlook:

President Donald Trump's stands on health policy include repeal of the ACA, with attendant changes to Medicare and Medicaid, prescription drug prices, the Opioid Epidemic, and Reproductive Health. The Republican majority congress is supportive of these changes.

- 1) Work with the Protect our Care Illinois (PoCIL) to protect health access gains made through the ACA and Medicaid Expansion in Illinois
- 2) Evaluate proposed changes for LWVIL action, such as state block grants for Medicaid.

IMMIGRATION

Kim Reed

After the Supreme Court's split decision in June 2016, when President Obama's Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) and expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programs were blocked, action on immigration had been stalled—until the January 2017 inauguration of the 45th president. Since January 20, there has been a flurry of activity around immigration and refugees. President Trump signed executive orders on January 25 to enable construction of a wall at the US and Mexico border, increase border patrol forces and immigration officers, withhold federal grant funding for sanctuary cities, and increase deportations of undocumented immigrants. That same week, President Trump signed an executive order for a temporary ban of refugees awaiting resettlement in the US. It also banned citizens of seven majority Muslim countries from entering the US on a Visa. This created chaos at US airports, resulting in protests and court action.

A Washington State federal judge put a temporary halt to Trump's ban, which was affirmed on February 9th by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Then, the same week the "Travel Ban" was being decided in court, ICE conducted deportation round-ups in 7 major cities around the country, detaining over 600 people in a week's time. It is now clear that ICE plans to intensify these round-ups, and the current political climate has created a tremendous amount of fear within immigrant communities. Not long after Trump's initial Travel Ban was halted, the White House issued an amended Executive Order barring those from 6 Muslim countries to enter the US. This ban, like its predecessor, is often referred to as the

“Muslim Ban.” Federal judges ruled against the ban, preventing it from going into effect. Immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, continue to live in fear of detention, deportation, and family separation. Many good government groups and immigrant-friendly organizations are providing “Know Your Rights” trainings and assisting these populations in putting together family and estate plans in anticipation of separation (temporary custody for children, etc.). Schools are seeing an increased rate of absenteeism from these populations as a result of these fears.

Activity in Illinois and the US:

In response to Trump’s actions, there has been a lot of activity in the Illinois General Assembly, with proposals ranging from inviting Mexico’s President Pena Nieto to Illinois to increasing immigrant protections in the state.

Chicago Municipal ID Program: In April 2017, the Chicago City Council approved a Municipal ID program. This identification card benefits individuals who either cannot or have difficulty obtaining government-issued documents, including immigrants, homeless persons, persons with disabilities, returning citizens, and transgender individuals. Chicago’s Welcoming City Ordinance already limits access of immigration status information and interactions with immigration enforcement.

The BRIDGE (Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy) Act in Congress: In January 2017, Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) re-introduced the BRIDGE Act, bipartisan legislation that would allow people who are eligible for or who have received work authorization and temporary relief from deportation through DACA to continue living in the U.S. with permission from the federal government. Identical legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO).

Status of LWVIL Immigration TFAs:

- HB3099 The Trust Act – (sent out March 5, 2017) Protect and build trust between law enforcement agencies and immigrant communities by limiting police involvement in federal immigration enforcement. Referred to Rules Committee at the end of March.
- HB426 The Safe Zones Act – (sent out March 5, 2017) Protect state funded schools, universities, and healthcare facilities from allowing access to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or agencies working on behalf of ICE without a valid court-issued warrant. Referred to Rules Committee at the end of March.
- SB0031 The Illinois Trust Act – (sent out April 11, 2017) Introduced by Senator Cullerton, seeks to protect and build trust between law enforcement agencies and immigrant communities by limiting local police involvement in federal immigration enforcement. Passed in the IL Senate on May 4, 2017 and arrived in the IL House on May 5, where its chief sponsor is Rep. Chris Welch.

Other League activity around the state:

- The Rockford League held an immigration program in March 2017 to build support for current state legislation to ensure protection and safety for our immigrant communities. The Rockford League is working with immigration attorneys in fighting the Winnebago sheriff’s efforts to lease jail space to ICE and cooperate with immigration agents.
- The Roselle League was asked to attend a Town Hall with their state representative in April 2017 in order to help build support for the Trust Act.
- Members in Lake County currently are looking to work with Mano a Mano in support of immigrant communities.

- The McLean County League currently is working with another community group, Illinois People's Action, to pass a "Welcoming City" ordinance that would help keep immigrant families together and safe.
- In DuPage County, there have been visits with local school district superintendents (coordinated by DuPage United) to ask what they are doing to help protect children in the possibility of parent detention or deportation.

MENTAL HEALTH

Judi Szilak

Governmental Action

Illinois continues to offer expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Health Care Act which has opened affordable treatment programs for persons with mental health and substance abuse problems. Stroger Hospital which serves Cook county residents is running without a deficit-the first time in recent decades. The Governor has proposed a significant cut to Medicaid services which would be detrimental to these populations. Under state law, Chicago residents can gather petition signatures to place a binding referendum on the ballot to establish an Expanded Mental Health Services Program (EMHSP). Passage of the referendum will increase property tax by .025 % (A \$16 increase for a \$4,000 annual real estate bill). Funds are only for mental health services in the referendum-affected community. A governing commission of local residents oversees the funds. EMHSP's exist in the North River area and the Near West side. Besides the new West side EMHP in Chicago, two Mental Health Boards (708) were created In Knox County and Bloomingdale Township (Thanks to the effort of the Roselle/Bloomingdale LWV) in the April 2017 election. Bloomingdale Township has a population of 111,000.

League Action

Local Leagues can take action under the state position which supports the establishment of mental health authorities (337, 533, 708 and the recent EMHSP's in the city of Chicago). All these boards are established by referenda. With shrinking state dollars and possible Block grants on the Federal level, local tax money for mental health services will be increasingly important. (Also see Criminalization of Mental Illness Action Focus above.)

Outlook

Leagues can lead community groups in advocating for taxing mental authorities to ensure local treatment programs. The establishment of Mental Health courts in local jurisdictions helps offenders obtain treatment and avoid incarceration. State Representative Lou Lang is proposing an advisory group to study and propose restructuring of the state mental health system. It would be important for LWVIL to participate if such a group is established.

OTHER SOCIAL POLICIES

Jan Kay

"The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that one of the goals of social policy in the United States should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty". In addition, the federal government should bear primary responsibility for financing programs in order to meet the basic needs of individuals and families. While States and also local governments have the secondary role of financing these programs which help in food needs, housing needs and income assistance, we have seen a tremendous negligence in the State of Illinois in taking on their responsibilities to meet these needs.

There are numerous reasons why self-sustaining employment may not be available to many. It is affected by a lifetime of not receiving healthy nutrition, quality child care, a good education, and stable, fair and affordable housing. The League advocates alongside many services which aid the formation of the most healthy and productive individuals and families around the State.

The League of Women Voters of Illinois and the League of Women Voters of the U.S. positions strongly support meeting the "Basic Human Needs" of the citizens in our State and Country. Within the last years, we have seen the need for such services to be radically increasing while at the same time we have seen the funding to meet such needs declining.

The issues for which the LWVIL is advocating includes: Income Assistance, employment, transportation, child care and housing. The LWVIL works alongside many research/policy organizations to optimize our advocacy efforts, including the Responsible Budget Coalition, the Chicago Jobs Council, and the Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.

Housing: The LWVIL has worked alongside of Housing Action Illinois and serves on the Advocacy committee of HAI. Affordable housing for individuals and families is a very large need throughout Illinois. In 2016, a family of 4 in Illinois was considered by the Federal gov't to be extremely low income if the annual household income was at or below \$21,400 and for a single person the amount was \$15,000. Renters need to earn \$19.98 in order to afford a modest two bedroom apartment. In order to afford rent and utilities paying 30% of their income for housing, a household must earn \$41,567 annually. Hence we have advocated for SB 647, which is the extension of Abandoned Property Relief for Local Governments and Foreclosure Prevention Resources for Homeowners. In addition we also have supported SB 885 which Protects Rent-to-own Home buyers and we oppose HB 3001 which is the "Weakens Security Deposit Return Act".

Most Housing Authorities in the State and around the Country have very long wait lists for the Section 8 Voucher which helps with funding housing for very low income people. In addition funding cuts have impacted the repairs needed for public housing greatly.

Child Care: The Ounce of Prevention continues to advocate along with the LWVIL and other child care organizations for funding to be maintained for Early Childhood Education, a very important piece of healthy child development for our Illinois children. The Early Childhood Block Grant provides State funding for early childhood education programs much needed for success in the child's progress. As we have reported in prior reports, birth to age eight time in a child's life is a very important time for physical, cognitive and social/emotional development for life ahead.

The LWVUS positions which the LWVIL uses in our advocacy "supports programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality childcare for all who need it" The LWVIL position states that the "State should play the leading role in meeting the needs of children and their families". With these principles in mind, we are very concerned with the budget impasse in Illinois.

In addition, the LWVIL along with a major player, Voices for Illinois Children's Fiscal Policy component continues to advocate for the Earned Income Tax Credit which helps lift families out of poverty, improve the health and educational outcomes of family members and positively impacts local communities. The League supports the advocacy of Voices, to invest in our youth through education and employment opportunities for youth in order to prevent incarceration. The League highly respects this work and

remains watchful for legislation than may come before the State's legislators.

Employment: As we consider the highly important issues involved in the family and individual lives, it is evident that employment is of utmost importance. Yet too many households are suffering from the lack of well-paying jobs. Income inequality is a major issue in Illinois. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, The IL House passed HB 2771 which would provide paid sick leave for those who currently do not have such a right. This legislation is now in committee in the Senate.

Transportation: While the League's position for supportive services includes transportation systems that afford access to employment and housing, we have found very little in place to carry this out in our communities, especially outside of large cities.

Income Assistance: We continue to monitor the funding levels at all levels to help those individuals and families needing income assistance in order to maintain a decent quality of life through housing opportunities, nutritional needs, education, child care and employment opportunities, including pay equity.

The League of Women Voters of IL must continue to advocate for our positions to meet basic human needs at both State and National levels in order to maintain a healthy State and Country.

Consolidation of Governmental Entities

Hilary Denk

At the 2015 LWVIL Convention, members adopted a position to address the rising concern of redundant governmental entities and the need for shared governmental services. Illinois has the most layers of government than any other state. There has been significant activity on the state and local level to address this issue, however most changes must first occur in state law. The LWVIL position addresses the factors and process of consolidation or elimination of a governmental entity, thereby allowing advocacy and education in this area. Because this is a complex and highly politicized issue area, the Issues Committee approved the formation of an ad hoc committee made up of members from throughout the state. A call for participation was issued by the E-News and Leaders Update and several meetings of the group have been held chaired by Issues Co-Chair, Hilary Denk.

The mission of this committee is to take positions on the state level and determine the best way to local League work for the transparent and informed decision making behind consolidation of governmental entities and services, both to reduce the number of taxing bodies in our state and maintain needed government services. The League of Women Voters of Illinois, county and local Leagues are uniquely capable of facilitating these changes due to high level of credibility, community involvement and well balanced information. The committee made up of leaders will support local efforts in the following ways:

1. Survey local leagues about past and present actions taken locally to consolidate governmental entities and services which was completed by March, 2017;
2. Creating a clearinghouse of information garnered from the survey, the state report and Transform Illinois reports – gathering of reports based upon the survey is beginning;
3. Provide a template and support for local League forums to educate stakeholders about legislative or administrative processes and potential outcomes from these actions;

4. Review and in some cases, take a position on proposed legislation, utilizing the LWVIL position, which focuses upon process and outcomes. Have specialists join the LWVIL Issues Committee to regularly report on legislative activity and outcomes.
5. Create written and digital educational materials for legislators, public servants, Leagues and other stakeholders.
6. Compile, maintain and disseminate a list of highly qualified speakers, with expertise in specific areas of government services and processes, to attend public forums, be part of a YouTube series and write blogs.
7. Dedicate a specific area on the LWVIL website, and potentially a dedicated FB page, to this topic for statewide and national use.
8. Train and involve our Local members about this issue and assist them in recruiting stakeholders to study local government consolidation, leading to more visibility for the League and expand membership. The committee will provide a workshop at the 2017 LWVIL Convention and regionally thereafter.

LWVIL partnered with the statewide organization, Transform Illinois, attending its regular meetings for the last six months and signing on as an organization to support **SB1** which expand the pilot initiative in three counties allowing county government take the lead on specific consolidation efforts. Cheryl Budzynski, on behalf of the LWVIL, attended informational hearings in Springfield in April 2017.

Next steps in 2017 include sharing the results of the survey, establishing a section of the LWVIL web page for a clearinghouse of information and presenting a workshop at the 2017 LWVIL Convention providing a League toolbox for addressing this issues locally involving stakeholders and increasing League visibility and reach and establishing issues specialists who regularly review legislation and join the Issues Committee.

Hilary Denk
Jean Pierce
LWVIL Issues Committee Co-Chairs

MEMBER SERVICES: BUILDING THE LEAGUE

The League of Women Voters of Illinois consists of 39 Local Leagues plus two MAL Units. Membership, as reported by PMP data for Jan. 31, 2017, stands at 2775, a 150-member increase from 2015 (5.7% increase). However, membership has continued to increase in IL since then, and as of 4/30/17, Illinois had a total membership of 3096, a 461-member increase since 1/31/15 -- or an 18% increase in membership.

For the past five years, LWVIL has participated in the Membership Leadership Development (MLD) program, established by LWVUS in 2010, to provide support to Local Leagues' efforts in growing their numbers and increasing leadership capacity. For the past three years LWVIL has sponsored a training day, facilitated by LWVUS Membership Services Director of Field Support, Kelly McFarland Stratton (2014 and 2015) and Ruth Shur Fellow National Coach Melissa Currence (2016). These training sessions were attended by over 40 Local League leaders, LWVIL Board and staff.

This past year seven state coaches worked with eleven MLD Leagues, providing the Local League teams with a monthly reminder of best practices and an opportunity to voice concerns and celebrate their many successes. The MLD program has made a difference in so many of our Leagues, as evidenced by

their increased membership and new leaders. Evaluations received indicate that these monthly contacts by the coaches with their Local League MLD teams have led, in many instances, to a special mentoring relationship among those involved. This, in turn, has led to greater successes for many MLD Leagues.

Kudos to the following Leagues that increased their membership since Jan. 31, 2015. (Figures are based on data available through April 30, 2017. Current MLD Leagues are indicated with an *; former MLD Leagues have 2 **.)

LEAGUE	NUMBER INCREASE	PERCENTAGE INCREASE
Arlington Heights/Mt. Prospect/Buffalo Grove**	21	88%
Central Kane County	5	13%
Chicago	117	86%
Deerfield/Lincolnshire	9	41%
DeKalb County MAL	4	44%
Downers Grove/Woodridge/Lisle*	19	48%
Evanston*	29	17%
Glen Ellyn**	23	21%
Glenview/Glencoe**	36	32%
Greater Peoria **	61	65%
Homewood-Flossmoor Area*	19	25%
Jackson County**	5	7%
Jo Daviess County**	13	33%
LaGrange Area**	15	40%
Lake Forest/Lake Bluff*	29	32%
McDonough County	5	17%
McHenry County**	13	43%
McLean County**	42	25%
Oak Park/River Forest**	27	14%
Palatine Area*	16	46%
Roselle/Bloomingtondale*	10	42%
Springfield MAL Unit	1	5%
Wilmette	40	56%
Winnetka/Kenilworth/Northfield*	5	7%

LWVIL thanks the following coaches for their dedication to the MLD program during these past two years:

Jane Ballengee (Glenview)	2015-17: Homewood Flossmoor Area and Winnetka/Kenilworth/Northfield
Jayne Boeckelman (Glen Ellyn)	2016-17: Evanston and Roselle/Bloomingtondale
Jan Dorner (Elmhurst)	2015-17: JoDaviess County and McLean County (2015-16) Chicago and Lake Forest/Lake Bluff (2016-17)
Hilary Denk (Downers Grove/Woodridge/Lisle)	2016-17: Edwardsville and Elgin
Barbara Marsh (Glenview)	2015-16: Lake Forest/Lake Bluff and Wheaton
Diane McNeilly (Rochelle)	2015-17: Elmhurst
Maureen McSherry (Homewood-Flossmoor Area)	2015-16: Edwardsville and Evanston
Maureen O'Keefe (McLean County)	2015-16: Chicago and Roselle/Bloomingtondale
Erin Roeper (Homewood-Flossmoor Area)	2015-17: Downers Grove/Woodridge/Lisle
Sarah Shirk (Oak Park/River Forest)	2015-16: Greater Peoria and Rockford
Ginger Wheeler (Glen Ellyn)	2015-17: McHenry County and Palatine

Several of our coaches will be leaving the program this summer and we are in the process of recruiting coaches to take their places. If you would like to participate in this program, please contact Erin Roeper (erinrpr7@gmail.com). Training of new coaches, along with Local Leagues' MLD teams will take place on Sat., August 19 this summer. Please save this date – and watch your email for more information.

In the past two years a list of “Talking Points” has been provided for Board members to use as they made contact with Local Leagues not involved in the MLD program. The goal was to contact the Leagues through phone calls or personal visits three times a year. We will continue this program in 2017-19.

An idea was developed by the Membership Committee to spotlight every Local League this year on the front page of the LWVIL website. Implemented by our Communication team and begun in February 2017, a short article and pictures supplied by each league have regularly appeared. Be sure to check our website each week so that you do not miss any of these informative articles about the exciting work accomplished by our Local Leagues (and you may find a few good ideas to “harvest” as well.)

Perhaps one of the most exciting membership activities in the past year was the revitalization of a League presence in Springfield with the re-establishment of the Springfield MAL unit. Nineteen members strong, this MAL unit is on track to become a chartered League by the end of 2017. We especially appreciate the support of our Executive Director, Mary Schaafsma, who has assisted with this revitalization, and we thank McLean County leaders Kathy Tosh and Maureen O'Keefe who have served as mentors for the Springfield MAL Unit.

A few years ago Champaign County began an internship program in which a U of I student receives a paid internship for a year and works on behalf of their League on campus to promote interest in voter services and good government. In addition to introducing college students to LWV, this internship program has helped interest the student unit members in getting involved in the Student Senate which gives them access to leadership roles within the University.

For more information about the internship program, contact the Champaign County League. In the meantime, enjoy reading this letter which was published in Champaign's May 2017 *Voter*, written by the 2016-17 intern:

I have felt both proud and humbled this last year during my internship for the League of Women Voters. This year, the League of Women Voters Student Unit's executive board collectively registered over 200 new students, and together with the Illinois Student Government we registered several more through the VOTEBIG campaign, where we sent an online link for voter registration to over 500 students on our listserv. We brought together students for several events during the election season, including a presidential debate watch party where over 400 students were in attendance.

In my role as the president of this nonpartisan organization, I acted as mediator between the Illini Democrats and Illini Republicans to successfully put on a debate between the two organizations when for years they refused to work together. I compiled an executive board that included some of the most hardworking and passionate young women that are admired for their leadership across campus. These young women were from the Illinois Student Government, Students Against Sexual Assault, Committee on Governmental Affairs, and both sides of the political spectrum. Our board, despite our differences, pulled together our resources and networks to have our secretary Raneem Shamseldin elected as the student body president at the university. Despite considerably less money and institutional support on our side, she won in a landslide victory. The League of Women Voters is now tied to the face of the student body and has been given more visibility than in years prior.

As my time interning for the League of Women Voters comes to a close, I am grateful for the type of platform this chapter gave me when interacting, cooperating, and collaborating with my peers on campus as well as elected officials. No matter where one falls on the political spectrum, it has become abundantly clear that organized people can be as powerful as influence and money. Now more than ever, the will of the people is being heard. Advocacy is a lifelong mission. It is not enough to be aware of issues on the federal or state level. My civic duty means using my voice to shine light on issues in the surrounding community that affect my neighbors, my peers, my friends, and fellow citizens. Nothing inspired me more than the members of the League of Women Voters who shared their wisdom and stories. While the causes and issues may change, what has always endured over the years is our collective responsibility to fight for a better world.

There was once a time when I was not only indifferent towards politics, I was disinterested. I shudder to remember those days before I had seen the light! Upon coming to the University of Illinois, I fell in love with the political process, changed my major to political science, and began looking for ways to get involved. I have come very far in my journey towards becoming the best civil servant I can be.

To have been the student intern for the Champaign County chapter of the League of Women Voters has been a privilege as well as a testament to how someone who was once so disinterested in politics can one day become a leader that empowers others. I am more than confident that the next student intern Patricia Rodriguez will make this organization proud and will be an agent of change for this community.

Trisha Rodriguez, the intern for 2017-18, and Raneem Shamseldin – secretary to the student unit of LWV who ran for and was elected President of the Student Senate, are attending this convention. Please welcome them.

The Membership Committee seeks off-board members to assist with its work. To volunteer, interested individuals are encouraged to contact 2017-19 Membership Chair/MLD Coordinator Jean Pierce at jeanpierce@aol.com.

Corrine Joyner
Erin Roeper
LWVIL Membership Co-Chairs

BIENNIUM REPORT 2015-2017

VOTER SERVICE: PROMOTING CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Voter Service is the founding principle of the League of Women Voters. Since the League was established in 1920, its primary goal of educating the electorate has involved registering voters, holding candidate forums and debates, and encouraging civic education and engagement.

This past biennium, LWVIL encouraged local Leagues to join the National Voter Registration Day, especially during the 2016 election year.

In 2016, LWVIL together with ABC7 and Univision cosponsored a number of televised candidate debates. These included: (1) both the March primary and November general election contests for Illinois U.S. Senator; (2) the 8th and 10th Congressional District November general election contests for U.S. Representative; and (3) the March primary Democratic contest for Cook County States Attorney. All of these had live streaming plus later television broadcasts including Univision's Spanish translation broadcast.

For both the March 2016 primary and the November 2016 general elections, LWVIL, at no cost, partnered with BallotReady for use of and access to its Voter Guide. Leaguer responses to the user friendliness of this guide was very positive.

In preparation for the 2016 elections, LWVIL conducted one moderator training workshop cosponsored with the Lake County League. Thanks to Missey Wilhelm as the workshop leader/trainer, LWVIL expanded and updated its list of moderator volunteers.

Former LWVIL president and LWVIL voter service chair Jan Dorner, LWVIL executive director Mary Schaafsma, and current LWVIL voter service co-chair Sharon Alter jointly drafted a successful \$50,000 McCormick Foundation grant proposal to fund Fall 2016 mock elections in Illinois high schools.

In preparation for these mock elections, Sharon revised and updated the Illinois Student Vote curriculum which became a 30-page resource document for high school teachers available on the LWVIL website.

Local Leagues recruited and volunteered as cosponsors of the high school mock elections included: Lake County, Champaign, LaGrange, McHenry County, Peoria, Oak Park/River Forest, McLean County, JoDaviess County, Chicago, Jackson County, and DuPage County Leagues: Downers Grove/Lisle/Woodridge, Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, Naperville, Roselle/Bloomington, and Wheaton. These League chapters worked with their local election authorities to secure voting machines or PDFs of the

ballot. In all of the 67 participating high schools, the positions voted on were candidates for President/Vice President, U.S. Senator, and U.S. Representative. There was some press coverage for Champaign, DuPage, JoDaviess, and Peoria.

Among the evaluation comments from teachers was the following one from Chicago: “Our goal was to make the voting process as real as possible so students had to go out of their way during lunch to another location. Thanks for your help in the process. Those that did vote were excited to have shared their voice!...In our classes, we dissected the ballots so that students could see that there were other offices up for election and read about what those offices are. It was pretty eye-opening to the students so that was very positive.”

One Leaguer from Peoria stated: “This was a fun project. It was a bit of work, but we had great cooperation from the [election] commission office. In fact, they think we should do these more often and do them for all school children, not just high schoolers.”

Thank you to all Leaguers who made these high school mock elections a great success!

In 2017, there was extensive discussion on the LWWIL “empty chair” voter service policy. Concerns were raised by a number of local Leagues which proposed some changed language. LWWIL Voter Service Committee, local League voter service chairs, and the LWWIL Board all reviewed multiple drafts of the proposed language. Several items were added so that the policy would include, in one place, clarification of LWWIL policy. At its May 2017 LWWIL Board meeting, the Board approved a new LWWIL Voter Service Candidate Participation Policy. This new policy was included via a link in the May 18, 2017 LWWIL Leaders Update and will be placed on the LWWIL website.

In Fall 2015, LWWIL became part of the Just Democracy coalition in support of Automatic Voter Registration in Illinois. As LWWIL Voter Service Co-Chair, Sharon Alter represented LWWIL at coalition meetings and conference calls. In 2016, Automatic Voter Registration legislation passed with bipartisan support in the Illinois General Assembly, but was vetoed by Governor Rauner. Legislation with multiple changes was introduced again in 2017. As of May 25, 2017, that legislation passed unanimously with bipartisan support in the Illinois Senate. Hopefully, both the Illinois House will pass Automatic Voter Registration and Governor Rauner will sign it into law in 2017 so that it can start being enforced in the 2018 election cycle. Many thanks to all Leaguers who responded to Time for Action (TFA) requests on this issue!

Kudos to all Leaguers whose assistance, commitment, and volunteerism facilitated voter registration, candidate forums and debates, and civic and voter engagement!

Sharon Alter and Irene Pritzker, LWWIL Voter Service Co-Chairs

TREASURER BIENNIUM REPORT: 2015-2017
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ILLINOIS

The League of Women Voters of Illinois has improved its finances over the past two years.

In FY 15-16 we budgeted a combined deficit of \$45,800 but actually finished the year with a positive balance of \$26,358. We got more income than anticipated. Thanks to Mary Schaafsma, Jan Dorner, and Sharon Alter, we were awarded a \$50,000 grant from the McCormick foundation for our voter registration work with high school students. We also received funding of \$8,700 from Independent Maps for our petition work.

We project for this fiscal year 16-17, we will have a positive balance of \$19,199 while we had budgeted a negative balance of \$28,400. Member support and non-member support exceeded our budgeted numbers. Member donations related to State of the State and tributes to Ann Wolf totaled \$10,000. We received two bequests, \$21,000 from an anonymous donor, and \$5,000 from Emily Levin in memory of her mother, Helen Levin, former LWVIL Board President and long-time LWV Champaign County member.

We reduced expenses by moving in December of 2016. We cut our monthly rent by 22% and got free rent for 5 months which saved us \$12,000. Like all moves, this required a great deal of work on the part of the staff. We also want to thank Nancy Clark for donating new office furniture.

Membership Increased by 100 by Jan 31 of this year and we have added more since then so we had an increase in PMP.

We moved the endowment to a more aggressive portfolio in September 2016 in order to make more interest and capital gains. At the beginning of calendar year 2015 we had \$478,365 in the endowment account. We withdrew \$30,000 over the last two fiscal years. As of May 1, 2017, our endowment balance was \$473,900.

In summary, we did not have to use the reserves we anticipated so we are going into the next fiscal year in a stronger position.

Kathi Graffam
Treasurer