LWVIL Issues Briefing 2016: Climate Change - Air Quality and Energy
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Actions Taken in 2015
Very little action was taken at the state level on air quality and energy issues this past year in anticipation of the federal Clean Power Plan rules put forward by the Obama administration as well as the United Nations Climate Change talks at the end of the year. However, there was some notable action at the local level in Illinois:

In early 2015 LWVIL and local Leagues in DuPage County successfully lobbied the county board to oppose construction of a low grade nuclear waste storage facility near the shores of Lake Huron. The final decision to build on the Canadian site is due on March 1st. A petition is currently circulating and LWVIL expects to act on this issue assuming we get the ok from LWVUS.

In September Mary Ellen Mathies of the Lake County LWV testified at a Lake County EPA hearing requesting strong and clear pollution control requirements be included in the permit for NRG’s Waukegan generating station that has been operating without a permit.

November: LWVIL successfully lobbied U.S. Senator Mark Kirk asking him to oppose a senate resolution challenging the federal Clean Power Plan. The senator had said publicly he would support the measure but he voted against it on November 18th. The resolution passed in the senate but President Obama vetoed it in December.

December: The LWV of Greater Peoria has accepted an invitation to participate in an area-wide coalition on Environmental Justice Issues that will support the federal Clean Power Plan and Illinois Clean Jobs initiative.

Anticipated Activity in 2016
Passage of the Illinois Clean Jobs bills will be the focus again for the coming year as implementation of the federal Clean Power Plan (CPP) moves forward. Sadly, on February 9, 2016, the US Supreme Court temporarily blocked the efforts to regulate emissions from the nation’s coal fired power plants. An appeals court is expected to consider an expedited challenge from 29 states opposing CPP before the matter comes before SCOTUS again. Illinois is one of 16 states not currently challenging the CPP. Legislation introduced last session by Reps. Nekritz and Fortner are the bills we will continue to support in the new session and a workshop is offered at the 2016 Issues Briefing. The Illinois Clean Power Plan goals call for a 42.1% emissions rate reduction to 1,245 lb of CO2 per megawatt hour. This goal is higher than the draft rule reduction of 32.9%.

To further push the federal CPP agenda, LWVUS asks that we work to advance Price on Carbon emissions legislation as well. Delegates to the 2014 LWVUS convention adopted a resolution calling for such a measure and a steering committee is in place - Eleanor Revelle of the Evanston League serves on that committee and further information is available in the LWVUS Toolkit for Climate Action at: http://participate.lwv.org/c/9217/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=9716

Illinois’ budget woes will have a huge impact on the environment across the state. According to the Illinois Environmental Council, cuts, sweeps and payment delays will impact environmental and conservation efforts including programs that support renewable energy business, support for municipalities and low income families to improve energy efficiency, recycling and waste management, water quality, and wildlife protection. For further information, see http://ilenviro.org/