LWVIL Issues Briefing 2016: Social Policy
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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, we believe the federal government must set "the minimum, uniform standards and guidelines for social welfare programs and should bear primary responsibility for financing programs" in order to meet the basic needs of individuals and families. While States and also local governments we believe 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.

What might be the most important issue in establishing a healthy and independent life for individuals and families may seem to be employment, there are many reasons why self sustaining employment may not be available to many. Beginning with a healthy family as a child, including healthy nutrition, with quality child care, a good education, including early childhood education through at least high school and now post-secondary education, stable, fair and affordable housing for the family, the League advocates alongside many services which aid the formation of the most healthy and productive individuals and families around the State. League works alongside Voices for IL Children, Chicago Jobs Council, Housing Action IL, Ounce of Prevention, IL Action for Children, IL Caucus for Adolescent Health and The Responsible Budget Coalition in order to make our voices heard clearly.

Given the Illinois' lack of funding the human services around the State due to the budget impasse as of July 2016, many are at risk of losing the crucial support needed for the basics in their lives. The following are some of the issues we have followed.

Transportation
While the League's position for supportive services includes "transportation systems should afford better access" for employment and housing, we have found very little in place to carry this out in our communities, especially outside of large cities. Individuals have found it extremely difficult to use effective public transportation, making employment availability difficult outside of major cities. This industry, itself, is undergoing major changes around the State in order to stay an economically sound business.

Employment
The LWVUS and the LWVIL have supported job training programs and any legislation that might arise to "strengthen employment protections under federal civil rights laws". We have supported pay equity and participated in Pay Equity events in Chicago and encourage members to support such efforts around the State. Job availability is yet another large issue in the State. With more jobs requiring post-secondary education it is more important than ever for Illinois to invest in education. Unfortunately, would be students are now at risk of attaining this necessary education due to the lack of funding for programs such as the Monetary Award Program [MAP] and other assistance to obtain family supportive jobs. Funding for child care continues to be one important need for parents to keep employment.

There is yet another employment issue, employment among young people. Even nationwide, 16-19 year old persons were very hard hit by the recession with only a 29% finding jobs while 20-24 year olds only edged up to 63% following the recession. In Illinois, 17% of 20-24 year olds were out of school and out of work. The situation is particularly acute for Blacks in this age group, 40.9% both out of school and out of work. The percentage of Hispanics and White youth is less without employment. As we know, work experience at these ages is of utmost importance given the longer term consequences into adulthood.