LWVIL Issues Briefing 2016: Fiscal Policy
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The temporary tax increase ended on January 1, 2015 and state revenues dropped. The state needed a supplemental budget to finish FY2015. The Governor and the General Assembly took months to agree on one. But then, they were unable to agree on a budget for FY2016 except for the budget for K-12 public schools. Spending continued for those areas of the budget which were subject to continuing appropriations and court ordered spending. Social services and state universities were not funded and were forced to make cuts.

The Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the Illinois Constitution prohibited changes which would diminish employee pensions and the Court voided a pension reform law which was designed to save money for the state. This answered questions about what the Constitution would allow and brought clarity to discussions of ways to deal with funding pensions.

LWVIL Actions:
Time for Action (TFA) requests were sent to League members during the spring legislative session with information about the League’s positions on the budget and on the need for important social services to be funded.

On July 28 the League held a Day of Action to pass a budget.

Another TFA request was sent in October during the Veto Session.

On October 20, 2016, in a joint action with other not-for-profit organizations, LWVIL wrote a Letter to the Editor which was published in the Chicago Tribune asking the governor and legislative leaders to meet to discuss the lack of a budget. They did agree to meet, but failed to agree on a budget.

Updates on the budget impasse and its consequences were sent to League members in the E News. Fiscal policy information was included in the Legislative Interview questions which were sent to local Leagues to be used for both Legislative Interviews and Candidate Forums.

Jean Pierce and the Central Kane County League held a press conference on November 17 to explain the ways that local service providers were harmed by the state’s failure to have a budget. Pressure generated by efforts like this resulted in some funds being freed up for some services.

LWVIL is an active member of the Responsible Budget Coalition (RBC) which is a coalition which advocates for adequate spending for education and health and human services. As part of this work, Claire McIntyre wrote monthly articles for the Rockford Star on budget issues. They can be found here:
http://www_rrstar_com/article/20160206/OPINION/160209614/0/SEARCH
http://www_rrstar_com/article/20160102/OPINION/160109936/0/SEARCH
http://www_rrstar_com/article/20151107/OPINION/151109605/0/SEARCH

On January 27, 2016, RBC held a rally in the Capitol building during the State of the State speech. League members attended the rally.