

The Chicago Voter

League of Women Voters of Chicago
Website - www.LWVChicago.org

February 2008
Vol. 58. No. 6



Dates To Remember

Meetings held at the
League Office
Unless otherwise
Noted

Tuesday, February 5th
Primary Election
Precinct Location
6:00 am – 7:00 pm

Monday, February 11th
Board Meeting
5:30 PM to end

Friday, February 15th
Briefing on
Health Care
10:00 AM – Noon

Monday, February 18th
Education Committee
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Wednesday February
20th
Unit 22 – Open Meeting
Cook County Issue
Juvenile Justice
10:00 AM – Noon

LWVIL Issues Briefing
Saturday, February 23rd
8:30 AM to 3:00 PM
Loyola Law Center
25 E. Pearson St.

Saturday, March 1st
Chicago LWV
Briefing on Con-Con
10:00 AM – Noon

Monday, March 3rd
Executive Committee
At call of President

President's Column

The saying, "If winter's here, can spring be far behind?" can be easily be applied to the Chicago League. For example, "If January's here, can June be far behind?" Plans are being made for our Annual Meeting in June and along the way there are a number of activities that are in process of being prepared for you. The Annual Meeting will be held at the Union League Club, probably the first Saturday in June. We will vote for the Slate of Officers, Board of Directors, and Nominating Committee Members and approval of the Operating Fund budget. An Application Form for board and committee positions will be on the web-site in March and in the **March Voter**. I hope some of you will consider taking a Board position.

Friday, May 2nd, is the date of the State of the City Luncheon. It will also be held at the Union League Club. The committee has been busy and can always use your help. The topic is about urban transit. There will be a panel discussion followed by questions from the audience.

Saturday March 1st, is the date of the briefing on the Constitutional Convention. Margaret Goldstein and Ann Logue will be leading the meeting. A representative from each unit should be there but all are welcome. Please call first as we must send your names down to the desk for Saturday admission to the building. This also will be covered at the LWVIL Issues Briefing on February 23rd. There will be programs and action on this issue before the November election

Millie Juskevics will hold a meeting on Juvenile Justice for Unit 22 on Wednesday, February 20th at the League Office – we urge all of you to attend this important meeting. Other briefings will be held elsewhere on March 1st and 8th.

Friday, February 15th is the briefing on Health Care at 10:00 AM in the Conference Room. See Clara Fleming's announcement in this **Voter**

I hope everyone voted in the Primary Election, early or on February 5th. We thank all who helped with the Pollwatching. We will begin registering voters this spring and pollwatching again in November.

Stay warm. Even though we are thinking of May and June, winter is still here.

LWV

Immigration Study Consensus Report

Background

Five units (43) members participated in the consensus process for the LWVUS Immigration study. Dorothy Scheff, Emelda Estell and I met and combined the results to produce the "official" report. This report was approved at the January 14, 2008 Chicago LWV Board meeting and electronically submitted to the LWVUS. That submission limited comments to 1000 characters (approximately 150 words) and so we had also prepared additional detailed comments, which were submitted to the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee.

Since the national consensus may not agree with the Chicago consensus, we will not be printing the numerous specific responses and detailed comments in this *Voter*. We will, however, include our general comments below. Anyone wishing to know the detailed contents of the Chicago consensus can contact me. Perhaps when the national position is available a comparison may be presented.

The LWVUS Board will adopt a position on Immigration based upon the responses to the consensus questions it receives. Once adopted by the national board, this position does not have to be ratified at the National Convention.

General Comments to LWVUS Immigration Study Consensus Report.:

This LWVUS Immigration Study generated a high member interest coupled with strong feelings. We are certain that the members who participated in this study have become much more aware and learned a great deal about immigration.

Members:

- Felt that questions were too lengthy and detailed, often lacking clear definitions of terms used. (e.g. criminal activity, family). It was possible to interpret the priority for consideration in both ways. There was not a way to indicate which way our members felt.

- Recognized that immigration is an exceedingly complex, multifaceted problem for which the existing laws are not being enforced. Some of the options offered within the question, however, were felt to be unenforceable. (e.g. fences)
- Concerned that US foreign policy impacts economies in other countries, resulting in pressure to immigrate (legally or illegally). (e.g. effects of NAFTA on the price of corn in Mexico)
- Have concerns regarding environmental issues and sustainability but do not favor limiting immigration in response to these concerns.
- Have concerns about the desire of businesses (and individuals) for cheaper labor driving the immigration policy.

Throughout our responses, the need for fair, livable wages was combined with protection of workers' rights and safety was given paramount consideration.

Helen Gabelnick

LWVUS

LWVUS files an *amicus* brief

"This month, the League worked to put names and faces on the people negatively affected by an Indiana statute under review by the Supreme Court. The strict voter ID requirement, argued this month, is among several state laws that disproportionately discourage minority, elderly, and poor voters from exercising their rights."

From the LWV Helping America Vote
This Primary Season, Jan. 24th.

The Chicago Voter

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A STATUS REPORT ON HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA'S CITIES:

A 23-City Survey December 2007
The U.S. Conference of Mayors

Among the major causes of hunger from their survey of cities are poverty, unemployment and high housing costs. The hunger crisis is intensified by home foreclosures and the increased cost of living in general. Sixteen cities cited an increase in requests for food and among 12 of the 16 responding, the median increase was 10%. The cities surveyed indicated their inability to meet emergency food needs. Seventeen percent of the people in need and fifteen percent of families in need are not receiving the needed aid and 19 cities said they expect an increase in the demand.

The most common cause of homelessness in families with children is lack of affordable housing. Also listed as causes within families with children are poverty and domestic violence. Among single persons, mental illness and substance abuse top the list of causes. Families with children make up approximately 23% of persons using emergency shelter and transitional housing while 76% are single.

Disability seems to be more common among singles than families with children. The average length of stay for persons in emergency shelters and transitional housing has decreased since 2006. Cities reporting indicated that the average length of stay in these facilities of a single stay was 5.7 months for households with children—for singles the length of stay was 4.7 in 2007. Once again the cities are not able to meet the needs of the homeless and singles, as well as families, so that persons are often turned away.

(Source of information: U.S. Conference of Mayors 2007 Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness)

HOPE VI Bill Passes House

The House passed the HOPE VI Improvement and Reauthorization Acts of 2007, HR 3524, on January 17th by a vote of 271 to 130. During the House consideration of the bill, supporters defeated several potentially damaging amendments while passing amendments improving the underlying bill. *(Note: Housing*

Committee members, as individuals, were asked to encourage their representatives to vote against the defeated amendments.)

On January 16th, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) sent a letter of support to Chairs Frank and Waters on the bill stating, "The careful work done on HR 3524 and its manager's amendment are such that we are able to endorse it and recommend support to other advocates. If enacted, the bill would reform a historically troubled program into one that can improve individuals' lives and the communities they live in." The White House released a Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) on HR 3524 on January 16th stating the administration strongly opposes HR 3524 but did not include a veto threat.

House Financial Services subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity Chair Waters said, "This bill has been a long time coming." Ms. Waters pointed to the many improvements to the HOPE VI program that the bill would make, including requiring the one-for-one replacement of units revitalized through HOPE VI and providing that residents of the original housing can live in the revitalized housing without having additional screening or eligibility requirements imposed on them. "We must reject any efforts to punish people for being poor." Ms. Waters said.

Ms. Waters offered a manager's amendment that requires one-for-one replacement (to be retroactive to units on the revitalized site on January 1, 2005, capturing units already lost. It also provides for a waiver of the bill's one-for-one replacement under certain circumstances. (The amendment was adopted by a vote of 388 to 20.)

(Selections from a National Low Income Housing Coalition e-mail received on January 22, 2008)

Lois Snyder

Join Us for the next Housing Committee Meeting on
February 4th, at 10:00 AM to Noon
In the
Conference Room of the
League of Women Voters
Suite 1150
332 S. Michigan

Issues Briefing For the Illinois League of Women Voters

On the last page of the **Voter** is a summary of the timetable for the LWVIL Issues Briefing on Saturday, February 23, 2008.

There will be two issue programs discussed in the morning session: the first of which is "The Pros and Cons of having a Constitutional Convention." The Illinois League will need to take a position on this issue and will undoubtedly send out a concurrence or consensus notice as to whether we will support or oppose this November ballot initiative.

Other topics to be covered in the morning session will be LWV Advocacy and Front-Burner Issues including Updates on State Fiscal Policy, Environmental Protection and Pollution Control and the *Show Us* Amendment which LWVIL is supporting.

For the afternoon program you will have to choose between Education Funding, Immigration and Global Warming. Discussion of the impact of state funding on local school programs will be emphasized in the Funding section; the effect on the community of deputizing local police in the Immigration section, and implementing the Natural Resources Positions in the Global Warming section.

Come and learn about the 2008 Priority Issues: Fiscal Policy/Funding of Public Education and Social Services as well as Environmental Protection and Pollution Control plus the 2008 Projects of Making Democracy Work – the *Show Us* Amendment and Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission.

Renaissance 2010

As part of the plan to enable schools to meet the *No Child Left Behind* criteria, schools which have demonstrated little or no improvement in their tests scores are slated for closing in the fall of this year. The program is being referred to as "turnaround."

Four high schools (actually two high school buildings): Harper High School and the three schools which were housed at Orr: Mose Vines

High School, A.A.S.T.A. High School and EXCEL - Orr Academy, for "turnaround."

In addition two feeder schools to Harper High School: Fulton Elementary and Copernicus Elementary which have not shown improvement over the last three or four years will also close.. Feeder schools to the Orr attendance area scheduled for closure: Morton Career Academy and Howe Elementary, again they have shown little or no improvement in the last three or four years..

In addition there is a plan to close underutilized schools: (Enrollment in parenthesis).

- Gladstone Elementary (287) – students will be assigned to Smyth and Plamondon elementary Schools;
- Johns Middle Academy (308) – to be absorbed into the new Miles Davis school approximately a mile away;
- The current Miles Davis Academy (306) – to move to the new school again about a mile away;
- Anderson Elementary (580) – students to be moved to Pritzker Elementary;
- Midway Academy (90) – close with children attending neighborhood schools;
- Carver Middle School (244) – consolidate with its feeder school, Carver Primary in the next building over;
- De La Cruz (102) – consolidate with Finkl Elementary (two blocks away)
- Abbott Elementary (90) – consolidate with Graham Elementary;
- Irving Park Middle School (348) – to Marshall Middle School;
- Edison Regional Gifted Center (274) relocated to share a building with Albany park Multicultural Academy housing two schools in one building;
- Roque DeDuprey Elementary (235) to be relocated in Von Humboldt Elementary school – two schools one building.

From Board News Release
Thursday, January 24, 2008

Donation in
Memory of Barbara Page Fiske
From Mila Meeker

Health Care Briefing

Friday, February 15, 2008

10:00 AM – 12:00 Noon

(note: change of date)

Suite 1150

332 S. Michigan Ave.

Speaker: Jim Duffett,

Director

Campaign for Better Health Care

Topics included:

The process used by Illinois for the promotion of health care for all

What other states are doing about universal coverage

Refreshments will be served

Invite your friends for this informative meeting

UNIT MEETINGS

Unit 1/5 – Downtown -evening – League Office

February 25th at 5:30 PM

Unit Leader: Margaret Herring

Unit 9/11 – West Side (central)

Unit Leader: Joan Morton

Unit 21/35 – North Side - Contact: Unit Leader

Bettina Schwartz or

Carol Westerlund

Unit 22 – Downtown - Daytime – League Office

Wednesday, February 20th - 10:00 AM – noon

Juvenile Justice - Cook County

(See article on page 4)

This is open to all League friends

Unit Leader – Bernice Fortini

Unit 41/42 – Southwest Side – at Fran Sowa's

10:00 AM - Noon

Contact Betsy Perrine

Program Planning Meeting

Unit 66/74 – Hyde Park Area – Day Meeting:

Thursday, February 21st

Montgomery Place at 1:30 PM.

Program Planning Meeting

Unit Leader - Dorothy Scheff

State of the City Luncheon

The Development Committee (which is in charge of the State of the City Luncheon) has been meeting regularly to firm up plans for the League of Women Voters of Chicago's major fund raiser.

Mayor Daley has accepted the position of Honorary Chairman for the State of the City, 2008. Selection of the Civic Contribution Awardees is pending and should be finalized, probably by the time that this **Voter** is in your hands. We are awaiting confirmation from our speakers at this time and will then invite the moderator.

The next meeting is set for February 1st, at 2:00 pm. Call Clara Fleming or Bernice Fortini at LWVChicago 312-939-5935, ext. 27. Help will be needed for mailings, answering phones and other activities as we approach the May 2nd date at the Union League Club.

Education Issues

Unless there is a great change in Congress, the reauthorization of *No Child Left Behind* (the latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) is unlikely to occur before the next president is sworn in. This means that questions about their positions for changes to be made in this law remain to be answered by our national senators and representatives as they run for election.

Local School Councils

The 2008 Local School Council (LSC) elections are scheduled for Report Card Pickup on April 16th for high schools, and April 17th for elementary schools. Parents of students in the school are eligible to run for the six parent seats and those in the attendance area may run for the two community member seats.

March 12th is the deadline for filing nomination papers to the school in which a candidate is running. The forms are available at the local school. (Submitting the required papers to the Central Office must be done by March 5th.)

Leaguers are encouraged to become active in their local schools by becoming LSC members and attending LSC meetings at the local school.

Illinois Constitutional Convention

The Illinois Constitution requires that the question of whether the State should have a constitutional convention be placed before the people periodically. Thus it will appear on the November, 2008 ballot. Such a proposal will be passed if approved by 3/5 of those voting on the question or a majority of those voting in the election. Approximately fourteen states require the periodic submission of the question of a constitutional convention to voters.

State constitutions are of necessity longer than the U.S. Constitution, because they deal with more topics and include detail. Consequently they invite more frequent adjustment as social, economic and political conditions change.

Submitting the question of a constitutional convention to voters is considered to be a check against legislative inaction. There has been concern with the reluctance of the Illinois General Assembly to place constitutional amendments on the ballot.

A constitution convention would open the entire document to change. In the vote no limitations may be placed upon the matter to be considered. Many feel that they would amend only some parts of it. Possible changes supported by League positions that might be considered are: abolishing the death penalty (Article I); merit selection of judges (Article VI); and a graduated income tax (Article IX). Another important proposal could be requiring that redistricting of legislative and congressional districts always be done by an independent body to avoid gerrymandering.

Other groups have their particular issues which they would like to see adopted and which do not coincide with League positions..

The constitutional convention topic will be included in the LWVIL's February 23rd morning session of the *Issues Briefing*. The Chicago League will hold its briefing for the units on March 1st at 10:00 AM to noon. Consensus will be taken at unit meetings. Local Leagues' consensus results will be due to LWVIL by April 16th.

Margaret Goldstein

Cook County Briefing Juvenile Justice

On Wednesday, February 20th, 10:00 AM to Noon, Unit 22 is hosting a discussion on Juvenile Justice in the League Conference Room. Millie Juskevics, who is Chairman of the County Juvenile Justice Committee, will lead the briefing/discussion. She and her committee have been working very hard to bring the Cook County League's Juvenile Justice Position into our new century. This has been a prominent item in the media and the problems seem to be disastrous. But there may be some positive things that are being accomplished in the system. Come to the meeting, bring a friend, and be an informed Leaguer. Other meetings will be held March 1st in Glenview and March 8th in La Grange Park. This is an issue upon which we are to come to concurrence (which means agreeing with the wording of an updated position).

Bernice Fortini

LWVIL

Issues Briefing

Saturday, February 23, 2008

Loyola University Chicago-Water Tower Campus
Loyola Law Center – Rubloff Auditorium
25 E. Pearson St.
Chicago

Registration, Breakfast & Networking
8:30 AM

Issue Programs: 9:15 AM to Noon

The Pros and Cons of having a Constitutional
Convention
LWV Advocacy & Front-Burner Issues

Luncheon: Noon to 1:00 PM
Workshops: 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
(select 1)

Education Funding
Immigration
Global Warming

Registration deadline: February 11th, see
Illinois Voter or online at www.lwvil.org.