



# The Chicago Voter

League of Women Voters of Chicago  
Website - [www.LWVChicago.org](http://www.LWVChicago.org)

February 2010  
Vol. 60. No. 5



## DATES TO REMEMBER

**ALL MEETINGS ARE HELD IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED**

Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>  
Social Policy/Housing  
Lois Snyder - chair  
10:00 am – noon

Executive Committee  
Call of the President

**Tuesday, Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Illinois Primary  
Election**

Wednesday, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Membership Committee  
Bernice Fortini – chair  
2:00 pm

Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup>  
Combined  
Unit Leaders & Board  
5:30 pm

**Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>  
City of Chicago  
TIF and Chicago  
10:00 am – noon  
Call the office before  
February 18<sup>th</sup> for the  
Building Security list**

Development Committee  
Contact Clara Fleming

Education Committee  
Contact Winnie Slusser

Social Policy  
Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup>  
10:00 am – noon

For information  
Call the Chicago LWV  
312-939-5935  
Ex. 28

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Dear League Members:

My husband and I just returned from a wonderful trip to Egypt. The temples, tombs and pyramids really look like the pictures. The scenery along the Nile River was refreshing in comparison to what we left behind here in Chicago. Cairo, like other major cities, has dirty streets, air pollution, traffic congestion and street people. Our guides were well-educated and frank in speaking about their country. Cairo itself has 18 million inhabitants and Egypt has a population of 80 million. I can't imagine living there. To curb population growth, the government is sending out people to encourage family planning. There is a 49% illiteracy rate. They are hoping that having computers in local schools and libraries will help alleviate this problem. Also serious, is the election process. Only 5% of the eligible voters vote. The answer from our guides was that the government is so corrupt that it is useless to bother.

With these points in mind let me remind you to go out and vote. The incumbents are not all bad, nor are they all good. Some people have been in office very long but still may be desirable. Others are so deeply entrenched in keeping their own power that nothing else matters. Study the candidates and the issues. You should be able to find time to go to the polls.

In relation to Public Education, we do moderately well in some schools, but too many are just keeping the children off the streets. It is a complex issue that involves many LWV issues: poverty, hunger, homelessness, health care, and school funding. We have our work cut out for us.

Speaking of "our work" the League needs its members, long time and NEW. There are briefings, committees, units and the Board of Directors. The same people can't do almost all the work forever. Others must participate on every level so that the organization can thrive. Otherwise we have no purpose.

Besides members, we need financial help. Dues are a basic level of support. Many people have tight budgets. If you started saving \$5 dollars a week in July of 2009, you would have had the \$70 for dues available before Thanksgiving. We expect an honest effort to help support the Operating Fund which is where the dues payment goes. Payment of \$35 dollars (half a year's dues) and shows that you care. Those who have not paid by January are being removed from the mailing list and will NO LONGER receive the Voter by US Mail. We can't afford to pay rent or even create some programs without these funds. We might as well go out of business.

It's up to you; help us turn around our membership activity slide.



## TRIBUTE FUND AND OTHER DONATIONS

With this Issue of the Voter we are re-establishing our recognition of donors and contributions to the Operating Fund and to a Tribute Fund in recognition or memory of individuals.

As noted in the December/January Voter, Bettina Schwartz, Unit 21/35's former co-chair has died, and donations in her memory have been received: Lois Snyder and Carol Westerlund contributed in December.

**July:** Norma Braude; Diane and William Edmonson; Helene Gabelnick; Ann Logue; Andrea Mancillas; Bev Mayer; Bettina Schwartz; Terry Williams; and Natalie Heineman.

**September:** Esta and Tom Kallen; Rose Shure, Lois Snyder; Anonymous.

**October:** Sue Weiler

**November:** Lakeview Towers Residents Association.

**December:** Nancy Kosobud, Rochelle Riffer, Mary Ellen Smith (Phonathon).

Donations from Oswelda Badel and Rochelle Riffer have also benefited the Education Fund.

As you know, donations to the Operating Fund are NOT tax deductible. But it is this Fund which pays the office rent and mailing costs of the **Voter** along with some program work. At present this is our area of greatest need.

### BE AN OBSERVER

If you have not already signed up, we need you to observe various city governmental units and agencies. Call the office 312-939-5935, ext. 28 and join the cadre of Chicago League Observers. The commitment is normally a once a month meeting (many do not meet during the summer) for a partial or whole day. A few of the agencies meet during the evening on occasion. Reports of these meetings may be posted on our website and/or included in the **Voter** for dissemination to all Leaguers and those who are interested.

Watching the interplay of commissioners and board members in the public portions of meetings can be an eye-opener. You will get a feel for how the City is governed if you participate.

### MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership committee will be meeting on Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 2:00 pm. It will focus on various topics for the next three "*Lunch with the League*" programs. The possibilities include: the Environment, Education and Employment. We will be discussing the important aspects of the topics or any other suggestions from leaguers. We hope to have guest speakers for the Luncheons. The dates for "*Lunch with the League*" are Wednesdays: March 3<sup>rd</sup>, April 7<sup>th</sup>, and May 5<sup>th</sup>.

At this meeting, we will be planning for community outreach programs, hoping to do something to attract more new members. All Leaguers are welcome to attend this membership meeting. We need your suggestions.

### VOTER SERVICE

Of all the activities of the League of Women Voters, Voter Service, is of prime importance. You can be a deputy registrar (applying through the LWVChicago-Terry Williams). The schedule for Deputy Registrar training is resumed on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, after the primary election. Call the office for more information.

#### YOU CAN ALSO:

- GO TO A UNIT MEETING
- COME TO COMMITTEE MEETINGS
- VOLUNTEER IN THE OFFICE
- ATTEND BRIEFINGS
- COME TO MEETINGS SCHEDULED ON SPECIFIC SUBJECTS
- CHOOSE TO BE ON THE BOARD
- BE MORE ACTIVE FOR LWV

## CITY OF CHICAGO BRIEFING

On February 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am we will be hearing from Alderman Joe Moore, 49<sup>th</sup> Ward, who will speak to us on the politics of the City Budget Process, and Bill Vaselopulos, Manager of Tax Extension, Office of the Cook County Clerk, who will cover Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

Born in Chicago, Illinois in 1958, Alderman Joe Moore has lived in Chicago's Rogers Park for 26 years. He earned a B.A. from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, and received a J.D. from DePaul University Law School.

Since 1991, Moore has been alderman of the 49<sup>th</sup> Ward, emphasizing ethics and reform in the City Council. He successfully sponsored a Whistleblower Ordinance that gives taxpayers the right to recover damages on behalf of the city against corrupt city contractors. He also sponsored an "Accountability in Privatization Ordinance" and was the lead sponsor of the "Big Box Living Wage Ordinance."

At the LWV meeting on February 20, he will address privatizing large capital assets, including parking meters. In addition, he will speak about a current 49<sup>th</sup> ward-wide experiment in "Participatory Budgeting" where the community is invited to decide how the ward will spend over a million dollars in aldermanic infrastructure funding.

Bill Vaselopulos has served in the Office of the Cook County Clerk since 1982 in the Accounting, Tax Redemption and now the Tax Extension and Accounting Departments. He received his BA from Earlham College, Richmond, IN.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a municipal financing technique which cities and villages use to generate money for economic development in a specific geographic area, generally designated as blighted or potentially blighted. Currently, there are 412 TIF districts in Cook County, generating a total of \$875M last year.

TIFs allow the municipality to re-invest all new property tax dollars in the neighborhood from which they came for 23-years or, if extended, 35 years. "New" revenues appear when

development takes place in the TIF, or if the values of existing properties rise, resulting in higher tax bills. With such a lengthy period, revenue to the TIF can be considerable. The Central Loop TIF expired in 2008 after receiving almost \$980M.

TIF funds can be spent on public works projects or given as subsidies to encourage private development. Land assemblage, demolition, new streets and roads are permitted costs, along with job training, low income housing and public building improvements or construction under certain circumstances.

Especially in today's economic climate, the proliferation of TIF's and the revenue generated plus perceived lack of transparency of expenditures and project decisions, have prompted calls for reform. 1991 was the last year for reform.

***Don't forget to call the office 312-939-5935 x28 to be sure your name is on the security desk's list for this Saturday meeting.***

***Carol Westerlund***

### UNIT MEETINGS FEBRUARY 2010

1/5 – Downtown - Evening  
Third Monday  
February 15<sup>th</sup> - 5:30 pm  
League Conference Room

Unit 9/11 - West Side – Central  
Contact: Joan Morton

Unit 21/35  
Day/Evening Unit  
Contact: Carol Westerlund

Unit 22 – Downtown - Daytime  
Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 am  
League Conference Room

Southwest side Unit  
Contact: The LWV Office

Unit 66/74 - South Side – Hyde Park  
Day Unit, Third Thursday at  
Montgomery Place  
Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm

## LWVUS

Mary G. Wilson, President LWVUS, issued a statement on January 21 decrying the Supreme Court Decision in Citizens *United v. FEC*. The headline says that this decision sets of “**Revolution in Campaign Finance Undermines the Basic Pillar of American Democracy.**” She noted that in doing so big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy. Quoting Justice Stevens, who opposed the action, “The Court’s ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.”

LWVUS requests that we continue to press our congressmen to finish the health care reform. We know that no one has received everything they wanted, but we must start somewhere.

**ACTION ALERT:** Stand up against weakening the Clean Air Act. Contact your congress-(wo)man.

There is a great deal of material available on the LWVUS website on all areas of concern to Leaguers especially on Climate Change.

## LWVIL

The LWVIL Issues Briefing is on February 6<sup>th</sup>. This is an opportunity for you to learn about LWVIL action items which concern you.

Along with working toward a correct count for the Census 2010, LWVIL is advocating for a new way redistricting is done, so that it will be transparent and fair, not favoring incumbents and providing adequate representation of all. LWVIL is part of a coalition working for The Illinois Fair Map Amendment Initiative. Efforts to obtain signatures will take place at the election on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, but there will be more opportunities to acquire the signatures needed for this initiative to be put on the November ballot. This is the time that such an amendment must pass if we are to see anything like a reasonable map for the State of Illinois.

Consult the LWVIL Web site for more information.

## LWVCC

Individuals have been signing up to observe and monitor various Cook County boards. If you are interested and have not done so yet, call the League Office 312-939-5935 ext 29 and express your interest. Information from meetings which you observe may be shared with Leagues throughout Cook County.

## LWVChicago

Our Social Policy/Housing Committee chair, Lois Snyder, again asks for your support on seeing that the National Housing Trust Fund is included in the Senate’s version of a jobs bill. It was included in the “Jobs for Main Street Bill” which passed the House. We need to keep our congressmen aware of this need. If this bill is passed by both houses about \$43 million would come to Illinois. It would provide jobs in construction and ongoing operations.

This **Voter** is out in time to remind you to **VOTE**. Remember, if you do not choose to participate in the February 2<sup>nd</sup> primary, you may not see a candidate of your choice in the general election.

Elsewhere we have made a plea for money in the Operating Fund. This is essential if we are to continue operation from an office downtown. We share space with LWVCC and LWVIL and have the use of the Conference Room. Since the **Voter** calls for action, it must be mailed out with Operating Fund money. Please be aware that there will not be a *State of the City* affair until Fall. This means that no new money will be coming to the Education Fund until the next fiscal year, but that Fund is adequate for this year but the Operating Fund is not.

### ***The Chicago Voter***

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