



The Chicago Voter

League of Women Voters of Chicago

January 2009

Website - www.LWVChicago.org

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Dates To Remember

Meetings held at the League Office Unless otherwise Noted

Sat. Jan. 3, 2009
Program Planning
10:00 am – noon

Mon. Jan. 5, 2009
Executive Comm.
5:45 pm

Tues. Jan 6, 2009
State of the City Committee
2:00 pm

Mon. Jan, 12. 2009
Board Meeting
5:45 pm

Sat. Jan. 17, 2009
Health Care Position Meeting - LWVCC
12:30 – 2:00 pm

Sat. Jan 24, 2009
Unit Leaders Meeting
10:00 am – noon

Sat. Jan 31, 2009
LWVIL
Issues Briefing
University Center

LWVIL
State of the State Luncheon
Thurs. Feb. 26, 2009
Noon
Union League Club

President's Column

We all know the saying about Midwestern weather. If you don't like it, wait five minutes and it will change. Can it also be said about Midwestern politics? For example: several weeks ago, a resident of Chicago became President-elect Obama. All those fine statements were made about him. The city showed itself gloriously on the evening of November 4th. The weather was great and the crowd in the park was large and well-behaved. The media pundits couldn't compliment us enough.

A month later, the image was tarnished by the revelation of some remarks made by the Governor, using ill-chosen vocabulary, and the media is having a wonderful time. Now they are ridiculing us because of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and general behavior of the legislature. The pundits and comedians are pandering to their viewers and readers with bad Chicago accents and references to the gangsters of the past, forgetting some leaders of high achievement like Simon, Altgeld, Ogilvey, Douglas and Dirkson.

Also, there are local people who think that if we had voted "yes" for a new constitution, we would have avoided the problems of succession and appointments that the legislature is deciding. Of course, a new constitution wouldn't be ready for at least two years.

Are we among the most corrupt cities and states? Not necessarily. Someone here got caught. Corruption knows no locale, social or ethnic group. We as LWV members need to be alert and active. We can wait for things to change, but we will keep informed in order to make good choices in the elections and keep in contact with our representatives at all levels of government.

The political climate, like our weather around this time of year, is slippery, foggy and if we are exposed to it for too long, dangerous to our health.

Happy New Year.



**For Unit Meetings
Contact**

Your Unit Leader

Or the Office – 312-939-5935, Ext 28

Election Met with Optimism by Low Income Housing Advocates

In November the housing community not only met the victory of President-Elect Obama with optimism because he was one of the co-sponsors of the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) Act of 2007 (S2523) but also because it took place in National Affordable Housing month. For his years in the U. S. Senate, Senator Obama has supported the NHTF. The website of the Transition Team lists increasing access for affordable housing as one of the two housing goals of the Obama administration and specifically mentions the National Housing Trust Fund. "Communities prosper when families have access to afford- able housing." They will also restore cuts to public housing operating subsidies and ensure that all HUD (Housing and Urban Development) programs are restored to their original purpose (www.change.gov).

In October the National Low Income Housing Coalition sent a letter to every member of the House and Senate asking for the following items in the second stimulus package to be considered by the lame duck session. They would like:

- \$200 million for relocation and temporary housing assistance for tenants who live in houses that are to be foreclosed upon.
- Protection for renters in properties about to be foreclosed upon, including at least a 90-day warning before eviction.
- \$5 billion for public housing capital funds to rehabilitate public housing.
- \$220 million in disaster-related CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funding for Alabama's post-Katrina housing needs which have been repeatedly neglected by congress.
- An end to HUD's (Housing and Urban Development's) authority to waive income targeting requirements for all Katrina/Rita CDBG funds.
- Congressional action to address the estimated \$3-4 billion gap in affordable housing production resources caused by the disappearance of the market for low income housing tax credits.

On October 20th the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities released a memo calling for as much as \$5 billion in public housing capital funds in a large economic stimulus package that has an infrastructure component (Source: October 20, 2008 NLIHC Report www.nlihc.org.)

Also included in the 10/20/08 report:

FACT OF THE WEEK

Areas of Concentrated Poverty, Areas of Concentrated High Cost Home Loans,
and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA)

High Poverty Area/Total Mortgage Originations	High Poverty Area % of High Cost Mortgage originators	Overall MSA % of High Cost Mortgage Originators
West Fresno/Fresno MSA	55.4%	33.0%
Central Cleveland/Cleveland MSA	23.7%	28.2%
Little Haiti/Miami MSA	64.4%	40.8%
West Greenville/Greenville, NC MSA	71.4%	24.2%
Chamizal/EI Paso MSA	38.1%	23.2%
Old Hill, Six Corners & South End/Springfield MA MSA	61.8%	26.6%

Source: Community Affairs office of the Federal Reserve System and the Metropolitan Policy Program and the Brookings Institution. *The Enduring Challenge of Concentrated Poverty in America: Case Studies from Communities Across the U.S.* (10/30/08) Washington, DC www.frbsf.org/cpreport

Program Planning for State and Chicago

It's that time of year again. We are called upon to provide input into the State and Chicago Program for 2009-2011. Taken from the State Program Planning Instructions:

Only with input from our members will we have a viable and exciting action oriented program to move us forward in influencing public policy in Illinois and Chicago.

This is a partnership process. It is the tool of the local League in the case of State and the Units in Chicago. It reflects the partnership between levels of League membership and culminates in the adoption of program at the needed level.

Every year in January through early March we have the opportunity to set program for two levels of League. No other organization has the system LWV does. While other organizations may ask individuals to submit their recommendations, League sets meetings at which the items are discussed and consensus reached. This assures informed grassroots participation in the planning process. LWV is not a single-issue organization and its positions are often inter-related. This is one of League's strengths, but it requires that members become well informed.

The Briefing Session on January 3rd will give information to the Local Unit Discussion Leaders for presentation to the Local Units. You have the opportunity to attend and be involved in a meeting of any one of the units. There are day and evening meetings - downtown and in the neighborhoods. Find one that you can attend so that your input will be well received and your decisions will be passed on to the Chicago League. In the case of State Program Planning, a compilation of the consensus received will be passed to the LWVIL State Board which will then provide the Convention with the finalized version of decisions reached by all the local units in Illinois. Chicago's local planning will be reviewed by the Chicago Board and will be submitted to the annual Meeting in June.

The process is three-fold. First we review existing positions. Brief summaries of the State LWV 2007-2009 and Chicago LWV positions are

included with this **Voter**. Your unit chooses whether to do this in one or two meetings. **Where We Stand** at the State level is available online at www.lwvil.org or in print from the State office. Chicago's may be requested from the Chicago office. Those of you who wish to have full knowledge of positions will want to see these publications. Have the goals of the position been met; is there still member interest, understanding and agreement on the item; and is the position relevant.

Second: Consensus is reached on whether we wish to retain the position as is, whether we wish to restudy or update part or all of a position, or drop the entire position. Positions which have been updated are submitted to the Local leagues to review the wording of the issue. Remember if you choose to drop a position, the LWV is silenced on that issue.

New recommendations are the third part of the process. If you have a suggestion for a new study, you need to define its scope and give a rationale for adopting it. Questions to consider in proposing a new study: Does your unit have a strong broad member interest in the issue and is willing to work on it? If the issue is for LWVIL, is it statewide, for Chicago is it citywide? Is the timing a political reality and can LWV make an impact? Is there already a state or national position under which we can work (if so it is action not study) and do you have someone willing to help on this at the city or state level?

Then we take note of other routes to action: Concurrence is the "act of agreeing with" a position developed by a resource committee, other Leagues or League boards. This is only useful if the item is straightforward and non-controversial and does not require preplanning. "The Will of Convention (or Annual Meeting)" specifies that local Leagues or Units may direct the state or Chicago League to take action on an issue related to a position already in place. A motion may also ask for the city or state to request action at the national level concerning specific advocacy. This requires consultation with the level of League to be directed. An "Action Focus" is also adopted at annual meetings or conventions while Legislative Priorities reflect both the interests of the League and prevailing present conditions.

LWVUS News

A fifth article from the LWVUS Climate Change Task Force is available online at LWV.org.

LWVIL News Issues Briefing

On Saturday, January 31, 2009 the LWVIL Annual Issues Briefing will occur at the University Center – conference Chicago, Lake Room, 525 S. State Street, Chicago. Registration, breakfast and networking start at 8:30 am, with the Programs at 9:15 am to Noon on the State of Illinois Governments, the 2010 Census, and LWV Advocacy & Front-Burner Issues. Luncheon is at Noon with workshops starting at 1:00 pm to 3 pm (you must select only one: Environment/Climate Change, Judicial Evaluation Commission, and Election Issues. The cost for the entire day is \$50.00 per person (includes continental breakfast, lunch, briefing packet and workshop materials) with the Morning Program only at \$30.00 per person (include continental breakfast and briefing packet) and the Afternoon Program only at \$35.00 (include lunch and workshop materials). Registration is due by January 16th. You may register online at <http://www.lwvil.loor/tickets09.asp>,

State of the State Luncheon

The State of the State Luncheon will be in February. This is the LWVIL's major fundraiser, and needs your support to help the League grow and prosper. Their keynote speaker will be Carol Marin. Please consider attending this valuable League function.

LWVCC News

Are you interested in the issue of Health Care? Come for a discussion of the position of LWVCC Where We Stand – see note in Calendar Box. If questions you have questions, please email cschilsky@comcast.net.

HELP – Join the LWVCC Observer Corps – an information meeting for prospective and current observers will be held on Monday, January 12th, 12:30 – 2:00 pm. For more information contact chair: Krista Grimm at grimmk@earthlink.net.

The LaGrange Area LWV is planning a meeting on Tuesday, January 27 at 7:00 pm at the La Grange Public Library - presenter Jim Broadway. The theme is what can and cannot be done by citizens. He is the head of the "Show Us" amendment initiative and has chaired the Illinois Democracy Project as well as served on the staff of Senator Paul Simon.

LWVChicago

Please make an effort to get to a unit meeting for Program Planning – as noted in the article, this is the backbone of the League. We need your input into where we need to go, what items are of interest to you and what needs to be updated in today's world. **YOU** are the ones who will carry on the program for the next two years and we need your involvement.

State of the City Luncheon

We can always use help in working for our big fundraiser – the State of the City Luncheon. As noted in the last Chicago Voter the topic will be economics and we will need help in: calling both prospective donors and supporters; preparing a mass mailing; and other planned activities for this event. Please let the office know if you can help and we will relay the information to the SOC co-chairs, Bernice Fortini and Pat Graunke and the Development chair Clara Fleming. We really need your support.

The Chicago Voter

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Chicago Where We Stand Summary

The following is a summary of the Positions to be found in “Where We Stand” for LWVChicago. Prior to application of the Chicago positions by local leaguers, they should refer to the complete position found in *Where We Stand – League of Women Voters of Chicago*.

CITY GOVERNMENT: The Chicago League favors the mayor-council form of government with non-partisan aldermen elected for a four-year term from each of the fifty (50) wards. Such election to be held after the redistricting of the ward following the ten-year census

CITY COUNCIL PROCEDURES: The Council should meet regularly and be legislative not administrative. Council committees should be as few as possible, meet regularly with timely public advance notice of meetings. Testimony should be part of the permanent record. A method to bring items out of committee for consideration and for splitting items with more than one proposition should be created.

The Journal of Proceedings of the City Council should be available at least 48 hours before the next meeting, indexed with a summary of debate. Other documents or record may be published separately if needed for reference.

The Mayor should be elected on a partisan ballot and should be a policy maker with a chief administrator overseeing the department heads who shall be held responsible for their areas.

CITY BUDGET: Should have a Municipal Budget Code and present expenditures by program in a line-item form, listing revenue from all sources. The budget making procedures should allow time for pre-budget hearings (to be held in neighborhoods as well as centrally), departmental hearings (with enough time for consideration of pre-budget hearing information as well as the departments – giving time to process amendments), public hearings with consideration of amendments (available in print) providing time for further hearings if needed before passage. The capital budget should be a separate item. Privatization of services should be considered if it will reduce costs/improve services in areas of specialized skills or when needed for rapid implementation of a pilot project. It should only be used if there are enough potential contractors to provide competition but should not be used to bypass labor unions or be at the expense of fair and safe working conditions or equal employment opportunities. Fringe benefits must be included.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE: Our present tax system is inadequate. We support General Revenue Sharing and aid to distressed cities. Statewide LWV supports equitable distribution of tax burden to relieve property taxes (improving assessment procedures) and a reduction of sales tax (on food and medicine). LWVChicago rejects gambling, specifically casino gambling as a source of revenue as it does not meet the LWVUS position “to promote economic health and improve the quality of urban life.” It may lead to an increase in crime and addiction to gambling diverting income from other entertainment.

HOUSING: There should be an agency to undertake long range planning with Housing and Neighborhood Development administering and coordinating neighborhood services. The Chicago League supports open housing policies with a city commission to investigate and initiate complaints with recourse to the courts should conciliation and mediation fail.

Multi-family housing: The Chicago League supports exemptions for multi-family rental housing targeted to building and tenants in particular trouble.

Condominiums: Strong tenant and consumer protective measures should be included. We support programs and policies to provide a decent home and suitable living environment for every family.

The city should actively seek funding for displaced tenants to help eliminate homelessness. The city should guarantee and facilitate low-interest partnerships to create multi-family, mixed-income rental units, utilizing Federal help where possible developers should be required to set aside low-income units as a condition for doing business.

LIVING WAGE: Shall be required in any public funded project.

LAND USE: *The lakefront* should be used for public recreation only, enhancing its natural beauty, opposing an airport in the lake.

Parks should be used for public recreation only, keeping buildings to a minimum, with equitable distribution of funds for maintenance and development. Sports stadium No public funds should be used to support construction or operation of a sports complex.

EDUCATION: We support universal compulsory education within the mandatory age (6-16) and increased funding. We support the Mayoral appointed Board of Education, with advice from an advisory commission, staggered terms, and expenses subsidized. Administration should be as decentralized as possible.

Local School Councils should have some authority over discretionary funds and student code of conduct as well as advisory roles in hiring and firing of principal and teachers, preparation of the lump-sum budget and textbook selection. Parents, students and teachers should participate in policy determining supplemental curriculum with the principal having authority to select teachers, prepare the budget and use discretionary funds as approved by the LSC. Principals should be subject to performance review by the LSC.

Quality and Equality: There should be improved facilities, programs and policies and innovative plans to provide quality and equality of educational opportunities, including integration of students and faculties. We support teacher certification and assignment, transfer and tenure policies flexible enough to allow faculty integration and encourage innovative instruction, thus ensuring qualified dedicated teachers. Positive physical and psychological environments should exist with effective pupil-teacher ratios.

Desegregation: The Chicago League supports magnet schools and programs with busing as a way to make quality education available to all. Housing pattern changes are needed to meet a long range goal of neighborhood integration. Human relations training must be available.

Adequate facilities with maintenance, rehabilitation and construction are needed to meet the needs of the students with an understanding of the fiscal arrangements for such work.

CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY: The system should provide resources and services to meet the educational, research, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of all Chicago residents. An adequate budget must be available with an increase in property taxes and other public and private resources. There should be a complete central library in one location, adequately staffed and a primary source for information. Branch libraries should meet the needs of the community and cooperate with neighborhood schools providing outreach to those who need it. Community participation in library decision-making must be available.

CABLE TV: Freedom of expression must be guaranteed. A minimum of public access channels and franchises must provide equal services. Subscriber privacy must be protected.

HANDGUNS: We support a ban on further manufacture, sale, transportation and importation for private ownership of handguns and their parts, along with registration. Licensing and permits should include handgun education.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ILLINOIS 2007-2009 POSITIONS IN BRIEF

The following are the *Positions in Brief* for the League of Women Voters of Illinois. Prior to application of the state positions at the local and/or regional level, Leagues should refer to the complete position printed in *Where We Stand*, including background and previous action.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on the state level in the following public policy areas based on these LWWUS positions: citizen rights, including citizen's right to know/citizen participation, individual liberties and public policy on reproductive choices; Congress and the Presidency; election process, including apportionment, campaign finance, and selection of the President; and voting rights.*

CONSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION AND AMENDMENTS: The League supports implementation of provisions for governmental change in the Local Government Article, and amendments to achieve merit selection of judges, a progressive, graduated income tax, the indirect statutory initiative and the recall of elected judges. The League maintains its support for positions already achieved in the Constitution but which may require effort to preserve.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE: The League supports expanded citizen initiative powers to change the structure of county government. Petition requirements for citizen-initiated change should be a percentage of actual voters in a recent jurisdiction-wide election. The League supports changes in the Illinois County Executive Act to provide a clear separation of powers between the legislative and the executive branches and easily understood referendum language.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE: The League supports the increased use of intermediate sanctions in the community. Judges should retain discretion to choose between imprisonment and probation for most offenses. The League supports a sufficient number of trained probation officers and other court personnel, prompt trials, enforcement of jail standards and a system of bail that does not rely on financial ability as a criterion for pretrial release. Correctional services should conform to national professional standards, with programs and services that offer the opportunity for self-improvement. The League believes that the justice system must be adequately funded to carry out its goals. State funds should emphasize community sanctions over the construction of prisons. The League supports the expansion of prevention and treatment programs in order to ease the burden on the criminal justice system.

DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION: The League supports abolition of the death penalty in Illinois.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION: The League supports legislative controls to stop the proliferation of private ownership of handguns and their irresponsible use. The League advocates restricting access to semi-automatic assault type weapons.

SCHOOLS: The League supports a system of high quality elementary and secondary schools for all children in Illinois, which provides for local control of school program and budget within minimum program requirements set by the State. The State should provide leadership to local communities for program development and should set standards for recognition and accreditation of schools. The effectiveness of educational programs should be evaluated regularly. The League favors minimum standards for graduation and promotion of students. The League supports increased professionalism for teachers including stringent teacher preparation standards, comprehensive teacher and principal evaluations, changes in tenure and increased teacher compensation. The State should assume the major responsibility for funding public schools and guarantee an adequate level of financial support. League believes that charters should be established by local school boards and that the Illinois State Board of Education should continue to monitor the progress of existing charter schools before supporting further expansion.

STATE ELECTION LAWS: The League supports uniform election laws and procedures throughout the state to ensure the integrity of the election system and opposes term limits for members of the General Assembly. The League believes that a good election system should provide stability and continuity of governance and should produce a legislature that addresses the problems of society effectively. It should be resistant to both outright fraud and other forms of political manipulation.

STATE FISCAL POLICIES: The League supports a diversified revenue system, which principally relies on a combination of broad-based taxes and user fees, is equitable, progressive, stable, responsive and simple.

STATE REDISTRICTING: The League supports a redistricting process, which is timely, orderly and meets the basic criteria relating to population, compactness and contiguity and the requirements of the 1965 U.S. Voting Rights Act and subsequent amendments.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on international relations issues only at the request of the LWWUS. These positions include: arms control; military policy and defense spending; trade; United Nations; and U.S. relations with developing countries.*

NATURAL RESOURCES POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on the state level in the following public policy areas based on these LWWUS positions: agriculture policy; environmental protection and pollution control; natural resources; public participation; and resource management.*

LAND USE: The League supports development of a comprehensive land use policy for Illinois that provides for orderly growth while preserving the environment, conserving natural resources and providing needed open space. The State should identify, plan for and have the final authority over key and critical areas within the state. Standards and guidelines for land use should be developed by the State with local governments making purely local decisions. At every stage there should be citizen input. The State should plan for adequate supplies of low and moderate income housing with every community providing a percentage under some kind of fair share plan. The League favors regional planning agencies with mandatory and continuous funding from local, regional and state sources. The League supports state enabling legislation for development impact fees.

LARGE-SCALE LIVESTOCK FACILITIES: The League supports strict regulation of large-scale livestock facilities on the state, regional and county levels to include statewide environmental controls, public hearings prior to siting and regional and/or county control of siting.

PESTICIDES: The League supports reduction of exposure to all pesticides. The use of non-toxic alternatives should be encouraged.

SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on the state level in the following public policy areas based on these LWVUS positions: child care; early intervention for children at risk; equality of opportunity, including opposition to school vouchers and tuition tax credits, employment issues, affirmative action, fair housing, and equal rights; fiscal policy (see Government); gun control (see Government); health care; meeting basic human needs; urban policy; and violence prevention.*

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: The League believes that the State should play the leading role in meeting the needs of children and their families and have the primary role in funding to ensure that quality services are equitably available throughout the state. The League supports a continuum of community-based services that strengthens and preserves families and fosters healthy growth and development of children. Prevention and early intervention should have high priority. The League supports a juvenile court system that provides opportunities for effective protection, treatment, and rehabilitation. Detention should be reserved for delinquent children who meet professional screening criteria and provided separately from adult programs. The League opposes the automatic transfer of children to the criminal court and the death penalty for children.

IMMIGRATION: The League supports State and local community efforts to provide orientation and counseling services for all immigrants. The League supports provisions for educational programs and materials on rights in the workplace for all workers, driving certificates for undocumented workers and the availability of auto insurance for holders of certificates. The League opposes deputizing state and local police to enforce immigration laws, and ordinances that penalize landlords for renting to or prohibit issuance of business permits to the undocumented immigrants. The League opposes extending the right to vote to the undocumented immigrants.

INCOME ASSISTANCE: The League supports income assistance and supportive services for all low-income individuals and families.

MENTAL HEALTH: The League supports a comprehensive and coordinated system of treatment and rehabilitation services for mentally ill adults and children. There should be adequate funding, planning, program standards, and personnel training requirements for both state facilities and community programs. The League supports a broad array of adequate and accessible community services. Although primary responsibility should rest with the state, funding from local, federal, and non-governmental sources should be encouraged. A system of local boards to levy taxes, administer all funds, and to plan and coordinate services should be required throughout the state. The State should require local governments to provide in their zoning ordinances for residential programs for mentally ill persons.

ACTION FOCI and STUDIES

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK: Assess and strengthen citizen participation in the state legislative process, which will include but not be limited to, efforts to pass the *Show Us Amendment*.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK: Efforts to increase voter education and reduce barriers to the electoral process. The action item will strengthen our judicial system by promoting the creation of an Illinois Judicial Evaluation Commission to provide voters with impartial evaluation of judicial candidates.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING: Promote efforts to provide stable, reliable and adequate revenues for public education and other social services.

STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: Investigate the need for a State Constitutional Convention. The Constitution of the State of Illinois requires that the question of a need for a constitutional convention be submitted to the voters every twenty years, if not sooner. The question was last submitted to the voters in 1988.