



The Chicago Voter

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

May 2010
Vol. 60. No. 8



Dates To Remember

All meetings are held in the Conference Room Unless otherwise specified

Monday May 3rd
Executive Committee
Call of the President

Lunch With the League

Date to be
Announced

**Saturday, May 8th
Education Briefing
School Governance
10:00 am – noon
Followed by
Education Committee
Meeting**

Monday, May 10th
Board Meeting
5:30 pm

Monday, May 17th
LWV Cook County
Annual Meeting
9AM to 1 PM
Brookfield Zoo

Development Committee
Chair – Clara Fleming

Education Committee
Chair -Winnie Slusser

Membership Committee
Chair - Bernice Fortini

For information
Call LWV Chicago
312-939-5935 - Ext. 28

President's Column

Dear League Members:

The turnout at recent meetings has been very good. I'm so pleased that many of you have attended the Wednesday "Lunch With the League" and the Saturday briefings. Topics have been timely and correspond with the LWVUS focus on Climate Change, Safety in the Chicago Public Schools and Social Policy.

Please remember that we are planning a few more meetings before the end of the League year. There will be a briefing session on May 8th on School Governance. "Lunch With the League" is to be rescheduled. Committees continue to meet – join one. More information and reports on programs are elsewhere in this issue.

Note the LWV Cook County Annual Meeting in May. We will report on it.

The LWVUS National Convention will be the weekend of June 11-15 in Atlanta. I have never been in the city, only at the airport, so I hope to take some of the short trips around town that are offered. These provide a needed break from the intensity of the plenary sessions and an opportunity to meet with Leaguers from all over the U.S. and discuss matters in a more casual setting. Of course, you know what the topics will be: Climate Change, Government, Elections, Voting Rights, the Judiciary, Education and the ever-present LWV issues of PMP, fundraising and membership growth.

Our annual Meeting is Saturday June 19th. We will have a presentation on the activities of the LWVUS Convention and how we will apply these ideas to our League. At our April Board of Director's meeting we decided that Education and Membership are two issues on which to concentrate. We also would like some members to volunteer to serve on the Board. Nominations from the floor are acceptable but names, presented beforehand, would be helpful. We need new people in order to create and participate in LWV activities. When there are few changes in leadership and a low level of participation, an organization does not grow. The material sent out from National is plentiful, but we need the people to make it happen. There is a saying "Many hands make light work." Our plans are not difficult but what we need is new people, new perspectives and new energy.

Esta

**It's not too late
Volunteer to join the Chicago LWV Board
We Need YOU!**

What you can do for the League

Do you have time to Join a committee?

The Chicago LWV would like to have you become involved in its committees: Development (planning ways to meet the League's budget) is under the aegis of Clara Fleming; and membership (increasing and maintaining) is directed by Bernice Fortini. These are our in-house committees. The Health Care chair is Clara Fleming, Social Policy is Lois Snyder, and Education is chaired by Winnie Slusser. These are some of our issue committees. Would you like to be an OBSERVER – we have Boards and Commissions which need people to keep an eye on them. Call the League Office 312-939-5935, ext 28 and volunteer your services.

Committees at the County level also are looking for members. The Cook County League has four Interest Groups which are meeting: Cook County Budget and Structure: to become involved please contact - Stephanie Polito – spolito178@gmail.com; Juvenile Justice contact Millie Juskevice – millie@juskevice.com; Forest Preserve District contact – Henrietta Saunders - hankandboys@comcast.net or Health and Hospital systems - contact Nancy Staunton – nstaunton1@comcast.net.

Tribute Fund and Other Donations

In memoriam – Betinna Schwartz – Esta Kallen

Thank to all of you who have donated to the Operating Fund so that we may keep our doors open.

Membership

Membership is important. LWVUS is considering dropping the national membership rebate and will consider any monies thus given as a donation. This will mean that, if you are a National Member, or donate to LWVUS in the future that you will no longer receive services from the Chicago League (such as this Voter). If

you are such a member at this time, please consider joining the Chicago League for the new fiscal year beginning on July 1st.

Climate Change

The League of Women Voters of the United States has made climate change one of its top legislative priorities. Most of us individually do our best to conserve for the sake of our planet, but we also can make a few small changes in the League office that would lead to reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and save money. Here are some simple steps we could follow:

1. Turn off the lights.
2. Stop using paper and Styrofoam cups and plates.
3. Offer pitchers of water rather than plastic bottles of water. Chicago water is among the best in the world.
4. Use copy paper with 100% recycled content.
5. Don't print it unless you really have to hold it in your hand.
6. Recycle. Demand for recycled paper will exceed supply within 10 years.

When guests come to our office we won't have to tell them we support the League's position on climate change. We'll show them.

Pat Graunke

Voter Service

Of all the activities of the League of Women Voters, that of Voter Service, is of prime importance. You can be a deputy registrar, applying through the LWVChicago through Terry Williams, by calling 312-939-5935, ext. 28. She will register you for one of their training sessions all of which are conducted at the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners at 69 W. Washington, 5th floor conference room. Registration for the Wednesday afternoon sessions closes at 3:00 pm the day before. Registration for the Saturday morning and Wednesday or Thursday evening sessions closes two days before at 3:00 pm. Give Terry time to get you signed up. Help register voters for the November election. Terry Williams has the schedule for these meetings, contact her, through the office, to sign up to become a Deputy Registrar. You are needed and this is important League work.

Education Briefing School Governance

For the Briefing Session on May 8th, we are asking you to come prepared to consider questions to update the Chicago Education Position on School Governance. Our present position with respect to Local School Councils is OLD. Our position on the School Board itself is what we would like to see, even though it is no longer true – we believe we should keep this as the ideal.

“SCHOOL GOVERNANCE:

The League supports a legally constituted local school council with some authority at each local school. The council should include parents, teachers, community representatives and the principal. The council should have final authority for the expenditure of discretionary funds and the student code of conduct and should have advisory roles only in the hiring and firing of the principal and teachers, preparation of the lump sum budget and textbook selection.”

The Illinois School Code specifies the structure of Local School Councils for Chicago. They are elected and have a composition of six parents, two community members, two teachers and the principal. New Councils were elected in April 2010 at the time of Parent/Teacher Conferences at Report Card Pickup. Present duties are: selection of a principal for a five year contract; control of the school budget and creation of the School Improvement Plan. The role is **NOT** advisory, although Illinois State Senator Meeks introduced a bill to make it so. The bill went nowhere.

The Charter Schools and Contract Schools which are created by the Chicago Board of Education do not have such councils. They have a Board of Directors under the control of the sponsoring Charter or Contract organization.

Dr. William Rice of the staff of the Chicago Board of Education will make a presentation at the briefing. He will address the Local School Councils and their mandated responsibilities, including how they are functioning to provide the best education for each local school. We also hope to have someone who can tell us what is

happening with the governance of the Charter and Contract schools.

We will describe some of the freedoms of the “autonomous schools,” and the limitations which are made upon those schools which are deemed “in need of improvement” or for turnaround.

Please come to the briefing session with your questions and suggestions. There will be an Education Committee meeting immediately following the Briefing Session to begin to create consensus questions for the local units, in order to update on our position. See p4 of this **Voter**.

The real problem is the necessity of getting parents and the community involved in making their local schools a safe learning environment which gives every child the chance to succeed.

Don't forget to let us know that you are coming – as we must give notice to the Building Security of those expected to attend. Call the office by Thursday, May 6th, 312-939-5935, Ext 28 to reserve.

Winnie Slusser

Unit Meetings - May 2010

Unit 1/5 – Downtown - Evening
Third Monday, May 17th - 5:30 pm
League Conference Room
Contact – Margaret Herring

Unit 9/11 - West Side – Central
Sunday, May 16th - 2:00 pm
Third Unitarian Church
Contact – Joan Morton

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

Unit 22 – Downtown – Daytime
Thursday, May 13th - 10:00 am
League Conference Room
Contact – Bernice Fortini

Unit 41/42 – Southwest Side
Day/Evening Unit
Contact - the office

Unit 66/74 - South Side – Hyde Park - Daytime
Third Thursday May 20th at 1:00 pm
Montgomery Place
Contact – Dorothy Scheff

Schools

LWVUS will be discussing the issue of the Federal Role in Public Education as a new study item at the June Convention. This means that we should have our local positions defined.

The issue of vouchers is ever present – Illinois State Senator Meeks has a bill which has passed out of the Senate and is in the House to provide a pilot program at schools in Chicago. It would supply vouchers at the foundation level for students to transfer to non-public schools.

The perception that non-public schools do better has been proven to be untrue. A new longitudinal study of the Milwaukee voucher plan shows that for the same kind of children, the non-public schools do not do a better job.

Please contact your legislator to oppose this bill SB2494.

More Background for the Briefing Session

LWV Chicago position on the Citywide School Board:

“SCHOOL GOVERNANCE:

Members of the Board of Education should be appointed, not elected, and should be selected by the mayor solely from recommendations of an advisory commission. Members of the screening commission should be representative of the city as a whole. Nomination and selection of school board members should be on a nonpartisan basis; members should be citizens, registered voters, Chicago residents for 3 years prior to appointment and have some familiarity with the public schools. The League opposes legal apportionment of membership by race, ethnicity, vocation, geographic area, gender, or any other classification.

The terms of Board of Education members should be staggered. The League supports compensation of members, at least for expenses.

From Chicago Where We Stand 2009-2011

This is an ideal, and what was in place when Harold Washington was Mayor, before the advent of elected Local School Councils. Three names for each position were presented by the advisory commission and the Mayor selected from these names. Not all Mayors did so, but the system resulted in an excellent mix at the time Harold Washington was Mayor when the Board had eleven members. This was not always true with prior mayors. Today we have a seven

member board, chosen by the Mayor, without reference to any advisory commission. There is always the question of an elected school board, but what research has been done, does not show (for big cities) very much difference. The problem with elections is their cost. Citywide elections would require an inordinate expenditure of money to cover the city; dividing the city into seven districts would provide areas larger than those of our congressional districts – again a big cost factor. Would we get better school board members?

*LWV Chicago position on Local School Councils
(a repeat from page 3):*

“SCHOOL GOVERNANCE:

The League supports a legally constituted local school council with some authority at each local school. The council should include parents, teachers, community representatives and the principal. The council should have final authority for the expenditure of discretionary funds and the student code of conduct and should have advisory roles only in the hiring and firing of the principal and teachers, preparation of the lump sum budget and textbook selection.”

From Chicago Where We Stand 2009-2011

Is the presently mandated elected Local School Councils adequate for those public schools which the Chicago Board of Education has direct control over? What is happening in the Charter Schools which do not have such councils, but have Boards representing the agencies which promulgate the school? The Contract Schools, where the Chicago Board hires an outside firm to run the school also has a board representing that agency. What should be required to ascertain that parent and community concerns are adequately addressed?

When the Chicago Board of Education decides that a school is performing well and can become autonomous, what does this mean?

When the school is named “in need of improvement,” what happens to a Local School Council? Is there a way that this can be done to maximize parent and community involvement in the turnaround?

What other questions do you have regarding local school governance? Please bring them with you to the meeting and share with us so that we may have an all-inclusive position.

Safety and Security Strategy “Lunch With the League”

“Lunch With the League” on April 7th featured a presentation by Carl Hurdlik on the Safety and Security Strategy of the Chicago Public Schools released in September 2009. This two-year report begins by saying that “violence involving CPS students is unacceptable.”

None of the multitude of shootings have occurred within the schools proper, and only 20% have occurred during school hours. But there are common risk factors that may predict the kind of victim involved. Uncontrollable factors, including gender and race indicate that only 10% of the victims were female (they are 51% of the school population) and African/American males make up 80% of the victims (51% of the population); 19% Hispanic males (36% of the population); 1% White/Other males (9% White and 4% Other).

“More controllable” risk factors include the type of school: Selective, Magnets, Military, Career Academies, Charter, Alternative and neighborhood schools. As could be expected, the Selective, Magnet and Military schools account for 3% of the shootings while they serve 18% of the population. Charter Schools have 2% of the victims and serve 9% of the population. Career Academies have had 13% of the gun violence with 10% of the population. Alternative Schools, which serve the most at-risk children, have had 27% of the problems but serve 5% of the population. Neighborhood high schools have 55% of the shootings and serve 58% of the population.

Some predictions for students becoming a victim: 200 students are at ultra-high risk (over 20%), 1,000 students are at high risk (7.5-20%); 8,500 students are at some risk (1-7.5%) and the remaining 100,000 students are at minimal risk.

The picture of the student victim which emerges from the study shows that 53% of the victims were more than two credits behind and had a 42% absentee rate. Only 9% of all high school students are more than two credits behind, and the average absenteeism rate is an unfortunately high 16%. Twenty four percent of the student victims were labeled “Special Education” (16% labeled so in the student population), and 7% of the student victims are homeless vs. 3% in the student population. City-

wide only 0.07% of the high school population was involved in in-school violence; an average of 4-6 incidents per 100 days of school, while 0.57% of the victims were involved in in-school violence.

Only about 30% of the variation in safety of a school is within the principal’s control. Thirty eight of the 89 high schools account for 80% of total homicide and aggravated battery incidents. Schools which perform well have a different safety philosophy favoring mental health and prevention while under-performing schools favor policing and punishment/discipline. Out Performing Schools, those performing reasonably well, allocate more dollars to safety, invest in social and mental health programs, are slower to expel and promote parental involvement. They provide more counselors and social workers per student and call the police less – except for false Fire Alarms – which empty the building setting the stage for mischief. These schools provide more dollars per student for safety and spend more on equipment, training and programs and less on personnel. Less severe discipline for first infractions is used at these schools, they warn and provide more in-school suspension, and more short suspensions and no expulsion while the under-performing schools suspend or expel more often. For repeat violations Out Performing Schools find other solutions and use expulsion infrequently. Parent participation is higher at these schools.

Thirty-eight schools are targeted for increased staffing of social workers and counselors; better training and hiring for school security guards; community-based members may participate in sensitivity training for security personnel; expulsion and disciplinary processes are being reviewed to involve parents more; and social and emotional learning programs are being instituted in these schools.

Since most of the incidents occur outside school proper “Safe Passage” is considered the key to success. Frightened children are more likely to cut school, and have poorer academic or extra-curricular participation.

Three community-based outreaches are being planned. A mentoring program to provide students with male role models, a “Safe Passage” program providing adult supervision on the way to school and “Culture of Calm” programs to involve schools with neighborhood resources to encourage students to succeed.

TIFs and City Budget February 20, 2010

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development tool, Bill Vaselopulos of the Cook County Clerk's Tax Extension and Accounting Office, said at a briefing held February 20th.

The three basic stages in a TIF are creating it, obtaining revenue from increased property values, and spending the money.

TIF districts are created under a state law for areas deemed blighted or in danger of becoming blighted. The municipality must approve the area to be designated, the redevelopment plan and a "project budget—an overview of development priorities for the area and how TIF funds will be spent over the 23-year life of the TIF. Municipal bonds are used to finance the capital improvements; those bonds usually have a 20-year term. TIFs can be extended for an additional twelve years.

When a TIF district is established, the County looks at the value of all property within the district, the Equalized Assessed Valuation, which is the base property value, is used for all subsequent calculations.

"TIFs capture money by devoting all NEW property taxes to redevelopment," according to the Cook County Clerk's office. "This means that once a TIF is established, all taxing bodies get no new revenue from the TIF. Their share of the property taxes is frozen at the level it was just before the TIF was approved."

Mr. Vaselopulos gave the example of the TIF used for the redevelopment of the Glenview Air Base that was closed by the federal government. First, the concrete runways needed to be removed at a cost of \$200-300 million. Then 900 housing units were to be constructed for a population estimated at 4,500. The land had belonged to the federal government and was tax exempt. TIF funds were used for the necessary infrastructure, the construction of two schools, K-8 and 9-12, a park and a firehouse. No TIF funds could be used for operating any of the facilities. This presented a problem with school taxes, including a shift to taxpayers outside the TIF district.

In Chicago, aldermen are involved in the process of determining TIF districts, Mr. Vaselopulos

explained. Also "porting" TIFs has become common. Funds generated in one TIF can be used for projects in an adjoining TIF. He brought and posted a map in the conference room showing how the TIFs in Chicago abut each other in long strings. An example of "porting" included using funds from the Central Loop TIF for the Millennium Park parking garages.

On spending the money, state law requires the office of the Cook County Clerk to receive and process the ordinance establishing the TIF district and directs the County Clerk to dictate to the Cook County Treasurer the allocation of revenues from the district.

A joint review board reviews the TIFs and discusses the district with other taxing jurisdictions. The board has no power, but can only gather information. The reports from the review boards are filed with the Cook County Clerk's Office and are a public record.

Finally, Mr. Vaselopulos noted that, had Chicago won the 2016 Summer Olympics, TIF financing would have been involved.

Alderman Joseph Moore, 49th Ward, reiterated the point the TIFs "do not steal money from the schools." He also noted no incentive exists to end a TIF early. Former Cook County Commissioner, now Congressman, Mike Quigley's paper on TIFs shows some of the quantitative problems, Ald. Moore said. One of these is the determination of whether any development would have occurred without the TIF designation and exactly how much did the TIF add to the levy of the district.

Alderman Moore discussed the gaps in the city budget and how the city is attempting to cope through furlough days and not filling vacant positions. Raising revenue (taxes or fees) requires political will, he said.

Property taxes are used for debt service and pension fund contributions. The city sales tax of 2.75%, the real estate transfer tax and various fees are used for operating expenses. The state determines which classes of services and sales the city can use as a base to collect sales tax. The base for the sales tax has shrunk as we have changed to a service economy; more services need to be taxed. Also the property tax is not so volatile as the other taxes, as it has less reaction to both good and bad times.

continues on pg 7

TIFs continued,

The national General Accounting Office has examined cities nationwide, Ald. Moore said. The cost of expanding services is greater than the projected revenues. The primary driver is health care costs, which need to be controlled. The challenge is pension liabilities. Chicago has four pension funds; the police fund was underfunded in 2008 at 47.3% and the fire fund at 39.8%. Politicians have not discussed this structural deficit. The city has begun to lease assets, including the Skyway and the parking meters. This action is seen as a "quick fix."

In the 49th Ward, participatory budgeting will allow residents to decide how the \$1.3 million of the city "menu money" will be spent. Ald. Moore took proposals for projects for approximately six months before his April 10th meeting. Early voting was provided allowing for 49th ward residents 16 and over, regardless of citizenship or voter registration status, to cast votes for up to eight (8) of the projects proposed. Ballots were cast by 1,652 residents.

The winning projects included: sidewalk repairs; bike lanes; a dog friendly area at Pottawattomie Park; underpass murals, traffic/pedestrian signal on Clark and Chase; artistic multifunctional bike racks; additional benches and shelters on CTA "E1" platforms; street resurfacing; solar-powered garbage containers; convenience showers at Loyola Park Beach; completion of path in Touhy Park; Rogers Park, historical signs; and residential lighting on Morse Ave.

Alderman Moore pledged to submit these projects for capital budget allocation, to the City of Chicago and its sister agencies for implementation. All of the noted projects are feasible, but most require final approval from the city of Chicago or its sister agencies. Alderman Moore has pledged to follow through on these projects, but cannot guarantee that the agencies will grant final approval to each and every one of them. They may be in conflict with previously planned projects, there may be legal restrictions, and policy decisions of the governmental entities may come first. Alderman Moore has indicated that if one or more of the winning projects cannot be implemented for any reason, he will use the allocated money for the next runner-up projects that fall within his 2010 capital budget allocation.

Reported by Norma Braude

Climate Change

The League of Women Voters of Chicago is happy to note that Patricia Graunke, along with Margaret Herring is working on environmental matters. They would appreciate hearing from those of you who are most interested in this issue as our attention is brought to things we can do as Leaguers to better; combat the problem of greenhouse gases. You may call the League office 312-939-5935 ext. 28 and leave your name and number for them. Margaret is in charge of Natural Resources and Pat is concentrating on the environment. Please consider becoming active in improving our way of life.

Adapted from Celebrate Earth Day LWVUS

Why is climate legislation so important? The scientific evidence is clear, climate change, caused largely by human emissions of greenhouse gases, is already threatening our health and causing environmental damages: including:

- Intensifying floods, hurricanes, sewage overflows and wildfires;
- Displace populations and an increase in the spread of diseases like malaria;
- Severe droughts and heat waves leading to heat-related illness and deaths;
- Crop devastation and drinking water shortages.

We must make serious changes through legislation

- Reduce U.S. emissions 25% by 2020 and 80-95% by 2050
- Fund to help the poorest countries deal with problems arising
- A 10-year moratorium on new coal plants
- Investments in a new clean energy economy, including wind conservation and efficiency programs that will secure energy supplies, foster innovation and create new jobs.

LWVUS has asked us to work in educating the public and lobbying Congress on climate change, and expects legislation to be introduced in the Senate soon.

LWVUS

The LWVUS Convention is coming In June. The *Leader's Update* reminds us that the delegate count is based on membership on January 31st. The Chicago League has two delegates, reflective of our membership.

LWVUS and LWV District of Columbia have released a joint statement declaring the linking of the DC Voting Rights Act with amendments to overturn gun safety laws is unacceptable. While the bill is presently on 'hold' it is not DEAD. Please let your Congressmen and women know that we oppose this linkage.

Elsewhere in the Voter you will see information on Climate Change. TAKE ACTION.

LWVIL

SAVE THE DATE!
Celebrating 90 Years of League
State of the State Luncheon
Wednesday, June 2, 2010
Union League Club of Chicago
Guest Speaker Patrick Collins
SAVE THE DATE!

It is not certain that we have achieved the number of signatures needed to put the "Fair Map Amendment" on the ballot. The legislature has chosen to put one on which will not correct the final outcome, leaving it up to the legislature to do the final map, which does not solve the problem.

Keep working for HB174 – which provides an income tax increase rather than the simple add on tax requested by Governor Quinn.

The *Sun Times* printed the State League's letter on SB2494, Vouchers for Chicago Public School children. OPPOSE IT!

LWVCC

The Annual Meeting of the Cook County League of Women Voters will be held on Monday, May 17th at the Discovery Center at Brookfield Zoo. A panel discussion of the Shakman Decree will be held featuring Mary Robinson, Cook County Shakman Compliance Administrator, Clifford L.

Meacham, Shakman Compliance Administrator for Sheriff of Cook County; and Jan Carlson, Shakman Compliance Administrator, Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

9:00-9:30 am Registration, Continental Breakfast and Silent Auction
9:30 – 11:00 am - Annual Business meeting
11:00 – 12:00 pm - Panel Discussion
12:00 – 1:00 pm – Buffet Luncheon

Cost \$35.00 per person, RSVP by May 11th

Silent Auction

If you have any items which the Chicago League can donate to this fund raising activity, it would be greatly appreciated.

LWVChicago

Our Annual Meeting is June 19th. Save the date and plan on being with us as we plan for another year of exciting League work.

SB2494 is Senator Meeks' bill for vouchers for Chicago Public Schools. As noted elsewhere in the *Voter* we ask you to OPPOSE this bill, calling your State Representative to do so. The bill has now passed out of the Executive Committee and will take much effort on our part to defeat it. See the information under SCHOOLS in this *Voter*.

Please note that the Battered Women's Network is having another training session for court watch volunteers for the domestic Violence Court beginning on June 4th. Anyone interested please contact Megan Rose at 312-750-0730 (phone), 9733 (fax) and 0735 (tty) email address megan@batteredwomensnetwork.org.

The Chicago Voter

League of Women Voters of Chicago
332 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1150
Chicago, IL 60604
312-939-5935, Ext 28
Email – league@lwwchicago.org

Esta Kallen	President
Helene Gabelnick	Vice President
Pamela Stauffer	Vice President
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