



# The Chicago Voter

League of Women Voters of Chicago

November 2009

Website - [www.LWVChicago.org](http://www.LWVChicago.org)

Vol. 60 No. 3



## DATES TO REMEMBER

### MEETINGS HELD AT THE LEAGUE OFFICE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Social Policy Committee  
Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>  
10:00 am to noon

Executive Committee  
Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Call of the President

Lunch with the League  
Census Presentation  
Wednesday, Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>  
12:15 – 1:15 pm

Structure of Cook  
County Government  
Briefing - All Members  
Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>  
10:00 am – noon

Chicago LWV Board  
Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>  
5:30 pm

Parent Notification  
Reproductive Choice  
Thursday, Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>  
Roosevelt University  
6:00 – 8:30 PM

Development Committee  
State of the City  
Contact: Clara Fleming  
or Bernice Fortini

Education Committee  
Meeting  
Contact: Winnie Slusser

Membership Committee  
Meeting  
Contact: Bernice Fortini

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Dear League Members,

Our Chicago Board members have been busy with plans for various activities. There is something for you. The words "Participate" and "Participation" appear very frequently in my columns. We have a number of ways for you to do this. Keeping current with your dues is important. We need to pay the rent and other costs of maintaining an office. Building membership is necessary for the same reason.

We have six units and could create others if there is a small group in a neighborhood that would like to meet together. We have committees that could use new people. There are City Council Committees that need observers along with other boards of city governmental agencies.

There are free programs that members and guests can attend. The Health Care Forum had a decent turn-out, the room was nearly full but it would have been nice to have had more LWV members in attendance.

Coming on the evening of November 12<sup>th</sup> is a public program on Reproductive Choice, co-sponsored by LWV, the ACLU of Illinois and the Pre-Law Department of Roosevelt University. This program starts at six, so you won't be home too late – bring a friend.

If you live or work downtown you will find our new series, "Lunch with the League" interesting and convenient. We will meet the first Wednesday of each month from 12:15 pm for one hour. Bring your lunch and we will supply beverages and extras. Guests are welcome.

When you read about Cook County Board of Commissioners, do you wonder what is really going on? Doesn't everybody? Gain some insight on this topic at our briefing Saturday, 10:00 am, November 7<sup>th</sup>.

You can't forget that there is a Primary Election in February. They are campaigning already. A Voter Service Briefing will present information on the election, Saturday morning, December 5<sup>th</sup>.

Remember that the League is a grass-roots organization which encourages input from our members on public and governmental issues. One way of lobbying is to contact your representatives at all levels of government. The Health Care reform issue is very important and you ought to contact your US Congressman and Senator NOW. The LWV favors a Public Option.

Building security requires us to provide a list of those entering the building on Saturday and after 6:00 pm. Please call the office ahead of time if you plan to attend an "after hours" meeting.

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**Calling for more active participation by the members of the League of Women Voters of Chicago**

**Be an Observer  
Go to Unit Meetings or  
Form a New Unit  
Attend All Member meetings**

**OBSERVERS STILL NEEDED**

Are you wondering what goes on at a City Council meeting? At a Chicago Board of Education meeting? At a Park District meeting? At the meeting of another Chicago governmental body? At the committee meetings of any or all of these groups?

Would you like to know and see and hear in person who the Chicago officials mentioned in the news are?

How about taking a trip downtown? Some of the boards and commissions meet elsewhere but their meeting place is noted.

If this describes you, please consider becoming an "official" LWV Chicago observer. The time commitment is perhaps once a month, sometimes less. We'll give you the tools and information you need to get started. You'll be one of the people *in the know*. We would like you to write your observations for ***The Chicago Voter***.

Please contact Helene Gabelnick or Esta Kallen at the office: 312-939-5935, ext. 28. Or you can email Helene at [helene@umich.edu](mailto:helene@umich.edu) or Esta at [tkandek@aol.com](mailto:tkandek@aol.com). We can answer your questions and get you started. If you are leaving a message, mention the area in which you are interested. Two persons attending is a good idea so that someone is available for each time a board/committee meets, and since everyone sees board actions from a different perspective. You can be the first to know what is happening, and the first to inform others.

We'd appreciate your being an observer.

**WHAT ABOUT BEING A DEPUTY REGISTRAR?**

Be able to register people to vote! The Chicago League of Women Voters is one of the submitting organizations for this activity. If you are interested, contact Terry Williams in the Chicago office 312-939-5935, ext. 28 and she will help register you for one of their training sessions. All Chicago Board of Election Commissioner training will be conducted at 69 W. Washington, 8<sup>th</sup> floor conference room. Registration for the afternoon sessions (3:00 pm) closes at 3:00 pm the day before. Registration for the morning sessions (9:00 am) and evening sessions (6:00 pm) close two days before at 3:00 pm.

There will be no training sessions in January, as Registration is closed during most of the month.

**November 2009**

Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> – 3:00 pm  
Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup> – 9:30 am  
Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup> – 6:00 pm

**December 2009**

Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3:00 pm  
Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> – 9:30 am  
Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> – 6:00 pm

**LUNCH WITH THE LEAGUE**

If you live or work downtown or nearby, please consider coming to our new informative lunch-time programs held on the first Wednesday of the month at 12:15 pm. They should run for only an hour. These are open to all Leaguers and to others. Bring a brown bag lunch, drinks and desserts will be provided. This month on of November 4<sup>th</sup> we will hear about Census 2010 from Mary Schaffsma, LWVIL Census Project Coordinator. This census will decide

- The number of Illinois representatives in the U. S. House
- The composition of the Illinois General Assembly
- The amount of federal funds allocated to Illinois.

Plan to lunch with us.

## REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE PARENTAL NOTIFICATION LAW

The League of Women Voters of Chicago, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Illinois and the Pre-Law Society of Roosevelt University are sponsoring an evening meeting from 6:00 to 8:30 pm on November 12<sup>th</sup> in the Congress Lounge of the Auditorium Building on Roosevelt University's Chicago Campus, 430 S. Michigan Avenue.

The speaker will be Khadine Bennett, the Reproductive Rights Fellow and staff attorney at the ACLU of Illinois, who will present ***“Abortion Rights in Flux, the Reproductive Health and Access Act, the Parental Notice of Abortion Act and the Impact on Illinois Women.”***

Two statutes – one newly in effect and one about to be considered – will make an enormous difference in the health of Illinois women. Come and learn about the newly adjudicated Parental Notice of Abortion law and how courts, doctors and teenaged girls are dealing with it. Ms. Bennett will also discuss the Reproductive Health and Access Act, which would provide comprehensive sex education, access to contraception and other reproductive health services. These are timely issues and should make for a lively discussion.

**LWVUS POSITION:** *“The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.”* This position was adopted in 1983.

### WHY UNITS?

Units are designed to provide small discussion groups on items of League interest. They serve to provide further information than is available from the internet – briefing sessions on an item ask the units to send a representative to lead the discussion on that item at the Unit Meeting. Free and open discussions are the basis and strength of League positions. Positions at the national level hold for all the lower levels. Your involvement and participation in a unit strengthens the League in its work at the national, state and local levels. Attend your unit meeting or help form a new unit and be an active Leaguer.

## COOK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The LWV Cook County will present an overview of Cook County government entitled “Cook County Matters: The Facts.” This presentation describes Cook County Government’s structure, budget and budget process, and some recent developments, such as the sales tax issue. With the election of some county offices in the upcoming 2010 primary and general elections, this is the perfect time to learn about county government. We expect Betty Hayford to be our speaker.

While the presentation is designed to be thirty minutes (not counting a Question and Answer period), we will allot the full two hours for our discussion. This is an issue which each unit could find a way to present it to a neighborhood group, as knowledge about Cook County Government is not widespread. If indeed you would like to do this kind of broader presentation contact LWVCC’s Betty Hayford, email [ehayford@gmail.com](mailto:ehayford@gmail.com).

### Unit Meetings

Unit 1/5 – Downtown - Evening  
Third Monday  
November 16<sup>th</sup> - 5:30 pm - League Office

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

Unit 21/35  
Day/Evening Unit  
Contact: Carol Westerlund or  
Bettina Schwartz

Unit 22 – Downtown - Daytime  
Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>  
10:00 am - League Office

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

Unit 66/74 - South Side – Hyde Park  
Montgomery Place - Third Thursday  
November 19<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm

## LWVUS NEWS

The League of Women Voters of the United States began airing a 30-second television ad condemning the intentional lies and desperate tactics of health care reform opponents. It will be aired only on select stations in Arkansas, Maine and North Dakota. LWVUS is asking us to help spread the word and join in the fight for real health care reform. The ad is available from the National League and tells us to call our senators, support the League in the fight for comprehensive, affordable health care for all Americans, and get people to join the League of Women Voters in making Democracy Work.

## LWVIL NEWS

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, LWVIL was named the lead agency for COMPLETE COUNT. The governor has pledged Illinois full participation in the 2010 Census, encouraging residents across the state to get involved.

It is absolutely necessary to get an accurate count, missing no one, otherwise redistricting of the state of Illinois for purposes of assigning seats in the House of Representatives and for redrawing the maps for the state senatorial and legislative districts will be inaccurate. Missing people may mean a loss of a seat in Washington, D.C., and affect our representation in Springfield.

As noted in the last issue, LWVIL has joined the Responsible Budget coalition which held its kick-off meeting in October and rallied in Springfield for a change in fiscal policy.

Save February 9<sup>th</sup> for the LWVIL Issues Briefing.

## LWVCC

The League of Women Voters of Lake Forest/Lake Bluff has available for viewing on "Health Care and How to Cure the Chronic Crisis" at [http://www.lwv-lflb.org/health\\_care\\_forum.html](http://www.lwv-lflb.org/health_care_forum.html) for your use.

On Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> from 11:30 am to 1 pm, plan to attend a "Lunch & Learn with the League of Women Voters of Cook County" featuring Cook County Assessor James

Houlihan on "Demystifying the Property Assessment Process." This fund raiser will be held at the DePaul Club at the DePaul University Center, 11<sup>th</sup> floor, 1 E. Jackson. The cost is \$30.00 per person. Reservations and a check made out to the League of Women Voters of Cook County are due by Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup> with information including name, address, phone, email and League with choice of ham, turkey or vegetarian sandwich should be sent to Priscilla Mims, 325A N. Oak Park Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302. Come and bring a guest or guests.

## LWVCHICAGO

"Lunch with the League" starts on Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>. December 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a meeting on **Health Care** and January 6<sup>th</sup> one on **Civics Education in the Schools**. If you are downtown those days, consider coming, bringing a friend and bag lunches. Chicago League will provide the beverages and dessert.

Help spread the word on Health Care as this issue is the hot one in Washington.

Margaret O'Hara attended the kick-off of the Responsible Budget Coalition. She reports that the group was diverse and included speakers: Senator John Cullerton, Jesse Ruiz, Ralph Matire, Dawn Clark Netsch, and Art Berman (retired state Senator). Others present were Cook County Clerk David Orr and Alderman Joe Moore.

This coalition plans to rally in Springfield and asks for support of all Leaguers.

### *The Chicago Voter*

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|                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Esta Kallen      | President            |
| Helene Gabelnick | Vice President       |
| Pamela Stauffer  | Vice President       |
| Norma Braude     | Secretary            |
| Rochelle Riffer  | Treasurer            |
| Winnie Slusser   | Voter Editor pro-tem |

## HEALTH CARE FORUM

On October 19, 2009, the League of Women Voters of Chicago hosted a health care forum held at Harold Washington College. The League was privileged to have a well informed panel including Dr. Quentin Young, Physicians for a National Health Insurance, Jonathan VanderBrug, Campaign for Better Health Care, Howard Peters, Illinois Hospital Association, and Courtney Hedderman, AARP. The moderator was Robyn Gabel, Executive Director of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition.

Each of the speakers voiced their greatest concern for what should be included in the Health Care Reform Bill.

Dr. Quentin Young, a long time advocate for Single Payer, feels this is the only way to control cost. To continue in the present system is wrecking the economy and makes American goods and services noncompetitive on the world market. He considers health care a right and not a privilege and would cover all people living within the country.

Jonathan VanderBrug's organization has worked tirelessly for Health Care Justice for the State of Illinois. His organization is greatly concerned with the 46+ million uninsured and would include a public option which gives the individual states the right to opt out. If Health Care Reform includes the uninsured there will be a great demand for primary physicians and professorial nurses and especially nursing instructors. Special training programs will likely be required to obtain the numbers needed. Historically, during World War II, programs were created to bring the numbers in these categories up to cover the civilian population while many were serving the military forces.

Howard Peters brought to the audience the concerns of hospital reimbursement. Presently hospitals are reimbursed 97% for Medicare and 70-78% for Medicaid, leaving hospitals to try to make up the difference from private insurance and/or private pay (individuals without insurance). These two categories of individuals account for 50% of bankruptcy cases. Many illnesses can devastate an individual's resources. Therefore it is essential that reimbursement rates should be raised and contracts with Health Insurance companies made less convoluted. To secure more bargaining power with the health insurance companies, hospitals have banded together into large hospital organizations, i.e. Advocate and Resurrection. A stand alone hospital has little bargaining power and must take whatever the health insurance companies wish to pay.

Courtney Hedderman's organization has a membership of 40 million and its greatest interest is protecting Medicare benefits. Additionally she would like to see a revision of the Medicare D law, eliminating the donut hole for prescription drugs and the addition of coverage for long term care in the home. The Medicare D law forbids the government from bargaining on the cost of drugs and the availability of generic brands may be delayed by the pharmaceutical industry. Therefore, Medicare pays full prices while other countries and organizations with bargaining power can obtain the same drugs for less. Presently, Medicare pays only for skilled nursing care with a limit of 90 day coverage. Individuals who spend down their resources can apply to Medicaid for custodial care (nursing homes).

Under Robyn Gabel's guidance questions were solicited from the audience and were answered by the appropriate panel member(s). Generally all agreed that with health care reform the need for primary physicians will become crucial. The Senate is now in discussions melding two committees' bills on health care reform. It will be necessary to wait for the outcome and if it passes to see how closely it comes to the Obama-Biden list of what they would like to see in the bill.

***Clara B. Fleming, Health Care Chair***

For more information: [Communitycatalyst.org](http://Communitycatalyst.org), [Medicareadvocacy.org](http://Medicareadvocacy.org), and Obama-Biden health care plan.

## **SOCIAL POLICY/EMPLOYMENT/HOUSING REPORT**

The National Low Income Housing Coalition in its September 11 *Memo to Members*, states the Administration has reiterated its commitment to fund the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) in 2010. The Administration refers to the NHTF as an important part of the resources needed to strengthen the safety net for those facing hardships and to revitalize communities. They will “work with the Congress to secure the funding needed to launch the Housing Trust Fund, which would expand the rental housing supply available for very low income families.” The NHTF is working on an amendment to the Senate FY10 T-HUD bill to direct \$50 million for project-based vouchers to be used in conjunction with the National Housing Trust Fund. These vouchers would go to the same state agencies that will administer the NHTF. If such an amendment is offered, the NHTF campaign will send out a call to action asking endorsers to urge their Senators to support it.

The Coalition on Human Needs indicates that grim Census data on poverty points to growing need even before unemployment skyrocketed this year. Uninsured numbers reflect the importance of public health insurance programs. The number of Americans living in poverty increased by nearly 2.6 million to 13.2 percent in 2008, a stark reminder of the toll the recession was already taking on families even before the economic picture worsened this year.

Continuing a long-term trend, the number of people without health insurance grew to 6.3 million, according to the Census data. From 2000-2008 the proportion without insurance rose from 13.7 to 15.4 percent. The numbers of uninsured working age adults (18-64 years old) increased from 19.6 percent to 20.3 percent between 2007 and 2008. The total of uninsured children dropped from 11 percent to 9.9 percent thanks to SCHIP and Medicaid that is unavailable to most adults.

The Chicago Jobs Council, in reporting on the Stimulus package, indicated that monies are available in several fields: Health Care, Manufacturing, Transportation and Logistics, Information Technology and Supporting Green Initiatives Across Sectors: retrofitting houses, clean coal, local and organic foods.

The Housing Action Illinois is working with other groups experiencing deep cuts in their state funding to get organizations and individuals to sign on to a group entitled “Responsible Budget Coalition.” They believe the revenue mix contained in HB 174 – a comprehensive tax-reform package passed by the Illinois Senate and approved by a committee of the Illinois House – is the most responsible framework for a financial solution.

***Lois Snyder, Social Policy Chair***