



The Chicago Voter

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

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LWVChicago Events

Social Policy Committee
Monday, February 6
10 AM to noon

Chicago Government in Focus with Mariyana Spyropoulos
Wednesday, February 8
5 PM to 7 PM
Union League Club

Voter Service Briefing
Saturday, February 11
10 AM to noon

Monday, February 13
Executive Board
5:00 PM
Board Meeting
6:00 PM
LWVChicago Office

Privatization Briefing
Saturday, March 3
10 AM to noon

Call 312-939-5949
For more information

President's Message

Thank you League members. You responded to our call to action (see page 3) to contact alderman about proposed changes to the City ordinance governing parades and public gatherings. While the City Council did not defer action so that it could hold hearings on the proposed changes, the changes enacted are not as onerous as Mayor Emanuel's original proposal.

Education and Action. The League of Women Voters offers us opportunities to do both. Are you interested in lobbying our legislators and executives at the local, state and national level? This entails responding National and Illinois LWV calls to action. The action chair writes letters and e-mails to officials on behalf of LWV-Chicago and prepares calls to action for our members. Board members work with the action chair to prepare letters. Our positions direct our action. Years ago, I was action chair and I learned League positions, and organization and advocacy techniques. Most rewarding was getting to know many delightful people who shared perspectives.

Thanks for urging the Aldermen to do right by the City and its residents.

Margaret

Chicago Wards Redistricted

On January 19 the Chicago City Council passed, by a vote of 41 to 8, the ordinance which established new ward boundaries based upon 2010 Census data. The changes do not take effect until the city elections in 2015; in fact the election of ward committeemen in March will be for the existing wards.

Unfortunately, although the Rules Committee held several hearings across the city, the final map was not available to the public (and many aldermen) until just before the actual vote. See the report by a LWVChicago member on page 4.

For specifics on the new wards see: chicityclerk.com/2012_redistrict.php and tinyurl.com/ward-maps to compare the existing and new maps.

Chicago Government in Focus

Our **CGiF** series continues Wednesday, February 8 with Mariyana Spyropoulos, Commissioner Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. Ms. Spyropoulos is a lawyer and environmental advocate who was appointed to the MWRD Board in 2009 and elected to a full six year term in 2010.

The MWRD is charged with treating wastewater, protecting the quality of Lake Michigan as a water source, protecting businesses and homes from flood damage, and managing water as a vital resource. The MWRD serves over 10 million people throughout Cook County and has over 2000 full-time employees and a yearly budget close to \$1 billion. Last year the MWRD voted to disinfect the wastewater dumped into the Chicago River from two of its treatment plants, a major switch for the agency which for years resisted calls to treat the water to kill pathogens.

Chicago Government in Focus



City of Chicago Budget Director Alexandra Holt spoke to about 60 LWVChicago members and guests at the fourth **Chicago Government in Focus** event cosponsored by LWVChicago and the Union League Club on January 11.

When the Emanuel administration took office in May it declared that \$75 million needed to be cut from the 2011 budget. Consolidations have been pursued where the city can work with Cook County or the federal government to become more efficient. One area for this approach is health care.

Transparency, accountability and efficiency are three of the objectives of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's 2012 budget that was unanimously approved by the City Council on November 16.

Picking up garbage on a grid system instead of on a ward basis is innovative (for Chicago) and less costly. The city is seeking bids for recycling services in various geographic areas. Both public and private sources have responded to the request.

Other cuts include the reduced use of outside counsel, better coordination of construction projects between the streets and utility departments so that first a street is torn up, the water and sewer lines repaired and replaced; then the street is repaved.

On the revenue side, the 2012 budget shows increases in various fees including vehicle sticker costs, use of the streets for loading areas and valet parking, billboards and other private uses. In the past, the city had made up shortfalls in revenue by one-time sales of assets. Mayor Emanuel will not convert assets into revenue, Ms. Holt declared.

Other sources of revenue include "enhancing debt collection with a target of \$31 million. The city will look at centralizing billing; for example a business will receive one statement for utilities, fees and other charges. The city will also work with Cook County in debt collection and procurement.

Mayor Emanuel has held town hall meetings and has used his website to seek ideas from residents. He received over 3,000 comments and suggestions. These ideas are reviewed and may be implemented.

Ms. Holt discussed the increases in water and sewer fees which will be used to replace aged water and

sewer lines. The city has 1,000 miles of water lines and 1,500 miles of sewer lines which are more than 100 years old. These construction projects are also expected to result in 1,800 jobs including apprenticeships.

Waivers of fees for sewer and water services for non-profit organizations cost the city \$75 million. Mayor Emanuel proposed phasing in fees for those organizations which have assets of more than \$250 million and can afford to pay. A discount will be given to hospitals which serve low income patients and provide charity care.

The Chicago Public Library has its own property tax levy, but the system has outgrown the resource. The city corporate fund includes an allocation of \$15 million for the Library. The mayor has ordered a partial closing of eight hours per week. Discussions are still underway with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the union involved.

The city is looking to initiate a "one-stop" shop for permits to encourage business development. The city is planning to consolidate the revenue and finance departments as well as the fleet and general services departments. A sting operation is underway to find fraudulent use of handicapped parking placards. Ms. Holt also discussed the saving of \$20 million in health costs through the use of an employee wellness program.

A revolving loan fund of \$20 million will be created to spur innovation. Departments can apply for money to keep the delivery of services while cutting costs or raising revenues or both. The fund will have reporting and oversight requirements.

A panel has been convened for recommendations on tax increment financing (TIF) districts, Transparency is key. Information for each TIF has been posted on the city's website, data.cityofchicago.org. Unused funds are to be returned to the local taxing districts. As the TIF's expire, the funds are recaptured.

Finally, Ms. Holt said the city is working with the federal government to obtain reimbursement of security costs for the G8-NATO summit in May. It is also seeking private donations for these costs.

Norma Braude

Chicago Government in Focus: Alexandra Holt
Broadcast on CAN TV:
Sunday, January 29th, 12:00 PM, Channel 21,
Monday, January 30th, 8:00 AM, Channel 19, and
Wednesday, February 8th, 3:00 PM, Channel 21.

LWVChicago Action Activity

In anticipation of the G8-NATO activities scheduled for May 19-21 the Chicago City Council passed an ordinance revising the policies governing demonstrations and parades on January 18.

If you are a LWVChicago member with email access you received the following Call to Action to contact your alderman on this issue.

“Please call or e-mail your alderman and urge the alderman to defer action on any amendment to the ordinance regulating parades and demonstrations. Ask that the City Council hold public hearings on the proposed amendments to the ordinance.

The First Amendment rights to free speech and assembly must be preserved. The wording of the proposed changes has not been disclosed and the public has had no opportunity to comment. Democratic government requires that citizens be provided adequate notice of proposed actions, and that government makes public records accessible and holds open meetings.

While all residents recognize that the simultaneous meetings in May of the G-8 and NATO summits may elicit large public gatherings, it is important that Chicago respond appropriately. We are a world class city and we must avoid reinforcing the perception of Chicago developed in 1968.”

The LWVChicago President, Margaret Herring, sent letters to all aldermen and the Mayor before the vote.

Voter Service

If Chicago is still seen as Capone territory it is also remembered for election fraud that hasn't been a problem for over 20 years. Yes, Ernest Hemmingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald were once registered from a skid row hotel but project LEAP (Legal Elections All Precincts) was founded in 1971. Their workers gave additional training to election judges and sent poll watchers all over the city. Project Leap declared victory and went out of business about 5 years ago.

Requiring that voters show a government issued picture ID is trying to solve a problem that does not exist. It creates a barrier for many registered voters. Those most affected are the elderly, young and poor voters. LWVUS and many other LWVs have been working on this issue.

The **Briefing for Voter Service** will be on Saturday, February 11 from 10 am to noon. Please email League@LWVChicago.org or phone 312-939-5949 if you plan to attend to be on the building security list.

Terry Williams, Voter Service Chair



As the March election approaches LWVChicago would appreciate members volunteering their time to enable us to provide Voter Service to the community.

Some activities are:

Responding to phone calls in the office. These always increase as an election approaches.

Registering voters and coordinating LWVChicago's voter registration activities.

Participating in candidate forums and helping to organize forums when requests are received from community organizations or candidates.

Find out more about these opportunities by contacting League@LWVChicago.org or 312-939-5949

Deputy Voter Registrar Training

The next training sessions for Deputy Voter Registrars are:

Wednesday, February 1, 11 AM

Thursday, February 9, 6 PM

Saturday, February 11, 9:30 AM

LWVChicago's Voter Service chair, Terry Williams, must register you for the training at least 3 days in advance. Please call the office if you would like to be included in the class.

These are the last classes before the close of Voter Registration for the Primary Election on March 20.

US Constitution Seminar

Some LWVChicago members expressed interest in a review of the US Constitution and amendments; so that we can be reminded of its provisions as they affect current political events.

If you would be interested in a short (2 hr) seminar please let the office know.

Health Care News

A number of new health and insurance regulations became effective on January 1, 2012.

Illinois Laws

House Bill 1192 prevents insurers from requesting or withholding recoupments more than 18 months after the original payment. In the past insurance companies could find a patient ineligible for services years after they had been performed and paid for leaving the patient and providers responsible for covering the cost. Imposing a limit on re-recoupment will bring some stability and predictability to health care providers and patients alike.

House bill 2249 will require insurance companies to cover outpatient self-management training, education and supplies for diabetes care.

Senate Bill 1342 requires hospitals to provide their written staffing plan for nursing care services upon request

House bill 1191 prevents an insurance company from excluding routine care when a patient is participating in a qualified cancer trial.

Senate Bill 2046 allows the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services to reimburse for a 90 day supply of a generic or brand name drug when cost-effective.

House Bill 1825 requires insurance companies to cover oral cancer treatments as they would other forms of medication.

House Bill 1096 requires that a Skilled Nursing Facility must designate at least one staff member to develop and implement policies governing control of infections and communicable diseases.

The LWV continues to follow the two holdovers from the last session, namely the Health Benefits Exchange and the Medically Accurate, Age-Appropriate Sex Education bills.

Federal Actions

In December, the Obama Administration, as part of its implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act, announced its intention to let states determine their own "essential benefits" for plans sold within their boundaries rather than setting one national benefit standard.

Health and Human Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said that "essential benefits" should include at least the

following general categories and the items and services within the categories:

1. Ambulatory patient services
2. Emergency services
3. Hospitalization
4. Maternity and newborn care
5. Mental health and substance abuse disorder services, including behavioral health treatment
6. Prescription drugs
7. Rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices
8. Laboratory services
9. Preventative and wellness services and chronic disease management
10. Pediatric services, including oral and vision care

Within those categories each state can determine its own basket of benefits. Public input will be received on the proposals before they are finalized.

Margaret O'Hara, Health Chair

Redistricting Hearing Report

I live in Lincoln Park, 43rd ward. I attended two of the public hearings about redistricting.

The first was well attended with about 650 people. At that time 3 maps were proposed. Alderman Richard Mell presided over the hearings. Other aldermen were present including 43rd ward alderman Michelle Smith. Alderman Mell indicated that the purpose of redistricting was to protect the voting interests of minority groups and have similar numbers of people in each ward based.

During the public hearing people from different minority groups and wards voiced their opinions about the 3 maps. Most of the residents of Lincoln Park indicated they were against the Map For a Better Chicago which divided the 43rd ward into 5 wards. As a result the residents of Lincoln Park would no longer have a cohesive voice, our 7 community groups would be divided among 4 other wards, that we just elected our alderman Michelle Smith and that our community is now in the process of working on several big development projects. Some also said that the purpose of this map is to keep some alderman in office rather than serve the needs of the residents. Speakers indicated that more time was needed to rework the maps, that many people were dissatisfied with them. For these and other reasons, the Taxpayers Protection Map, which kept the 43rd ward mostly intact, was supported by the residents of Lincoln Park and our alderman.

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Continued from page 4

The second meeting at City Hall provided 5 different redistricting maps. This meeting was much smaller. Five people from Lincoln Park spoke at the hearing. Again, people indicated that more time was needed to revise the maps. Alderman Mell indicated that they had been working on the maps since September.

Two days later, on January 19th, the Map For A Better Chicago was amended and passed by the City Council without another public hearing. Lincoln Park retained most of its ward, other existing wards remain divided.

Diane Handlesman

Social Policy Committee

At the last meeting of the Social Policy/Housing committee it reviewed the impacts of budget sequestration and speculated as to whether President Obama’s recent proposed defense budget cuts were in anticipation of defense sequestration. Members also brainstormed for the May briefing considering a panel discussion on the effects of both sequestration and cuts in the FY 2012 and FY 2013 budgets on the safety net, job development and unemployment benefits, social welfare benefits and food stamps and affordable housing. The Committee will meet in the LWVChicago office on Monday, February 6 at 10 am. New committee members are always welcome!

Herb Ziegelendorf

Great Decisions Group Starting

LWVChicago’s first “Great Decisions” discussion group is starting this month. Thirteen individuals signed up late last year to be part of this semi-monthly discussion group on foreign policy. Utilizing the non-partisan Foreign Policy Association’s Great Decisions book of articles and discussion questions on 8 different topics, the participants will get the opportunity to learn, consider, discuss, and get to know each other. In February the group will meet on the 14th and 28th at 1 PM at the home of Pris Mims.

For more information, contact the League office at League@LWVChicago.org or at 312-939-5949.

Pris Mims

LWVUS

LWVUS has issued a statement that the federal agency that is responsible for regulating money in American politics – the Federal Election Commission (FEC) – is totally dysfunctional. LWVUS asks members to

support a petition to the President asking him to appoint members to the FEC since the terms of many of those serving have expired.

LWVUS supports the President’s Keystone XL Pipeline Decision.

See LWV.org web site and their Facebook site to view the latest activity.

Unit Meetings

Unit 1/5 Downtown – evening
Tuesday, February 21 – 5:30 PM
LWVChicago Conference Room
Leader – Margaret Herring

Unit 9/11 West Side – daytime
Sunday, February 12 – 1:30 PM
Third Unitarian Church
301 N. Mayfield, Chicago
Leader – Joan Morton

Unit 21/35 North Side – Evening
Tuesday, February 28 – 7:30 PM
Home of Carol Ziegelendorf
Co-Leaders – Carol Ziegelendorf and Norma Braude

Unit 22 Downtown – Daytime
Thursday, February 16 – 10 AM
LWVChicago Conference Room
Leader – Bernice Fortini

Unit 41/42 – South Side
Call the LWVChicago Office
Coordinator – Marcia Cowing

Unit 66/74 – Montgomery Place – Daytime
Thursday, February 16 – 1:30 PM
Montgomery Place – East Room
Leader – Dorothy Scheff

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League of Women Voters of Chicago
332 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 525
Chicago, IL 60604
312-939-5949

Email – League@LWVChicago.org

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Chicago Government in Focus

A monthly series of informal public meetings where areas of Chicago government are discussed by city officials.

February Program Presents



Mariyana Spyropoulos Commissioner Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

**Wednesday, February 8, 2012
5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Program begins at 5:30
at the
Union League Club
65 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL**

Admission is free, cash bar
RSVPs appreciated - 312-939-5949 or League@LWVChicago.org

Dress: Business casual, no jeans/denim

Co-sponsored by the
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CHICAGO
and the
UNION LEAGUE CLUB OF CHICAGO