



# League of Women Voters LaGrange Area

January 2011

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
<i>TUESDAY</i> <i>January 18<sup>TH</sup></i> <i>7:30-9 PM</i>	<b>LWVLGA MEETING</b> <i>Driving Improved Healthcare Services at the Cook County Jail</i>	LaGrange Public Library Meeting Room A LaGrange
<i>SATURDAY</i> <i>January 29th</i> <i>9AM</i>	<b>LWVLGA ISSUES REVIEW</b> <i>Review LWVIL Positions</i>	Betty Doig's 108 S. Sunset LaGrange
<i>SATURDAY</i> <i>February 5th</i> <i>9AM</i>	<b>LWVIL ISSUES Briefing</b> <i>Review LWVIL Positions</i> <i>See flyer inside</i>	University Center 525 S. State Chicago

## “Driving Improved Healthcare Services at the Cook County Jail”

Most Chicago-area voters know that Cook County Jail is huge, and that it has problems, but the Jail's role in providing healthcare for detainees is not so widely known. In this program Richard Blackwell, Director of Process Quality at Cermak Health Services, will detail the current effort at Cermak to comply with the Department of Justice Consent Decree issued in 2008. Rick will help us understand jail population demographics and health programs (including women's health), key provisions of the Agreed Order that governs current monitoring by DOJ, and how Cermak intends to comply with the Order's provisions. Rick will describe the big issues facing Cermak, such as providing timely medications for 3,000 plus detainees in 17 locations spread over 77 acres.

Here's your chance to hear the inside story and ask questions about how Federal monitoring can help drive improvements in the operations of a key public function. Be sure to join us at the **LaGrange Public Library, Meeting Room A, at 7:30 on January 18!**

## LA GRANGE AREA LWV ISSUES BRIEFING SATURDAY, JANUARY 29

Stay current, and stay informed! Don't miss this chance to be with us us at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 29 at Betty Doig's to review the LWVIL stance on issues related to government, natural resources, and social policy. Then we'll vote on whether to retain, restudy/update, or drop these issues. Please confirm with Aileen Henkel that you'll be attending: **email [henkel77@sbcglobal.net](mailto:henkel77@sbcglobal.net) or phone (708) 784-1694.**

## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Leaguer,

I hope you had joyful, restful holidays. Our festive holiday potluck at Betty Doig's got them off to a rousing start.

Welcome new member **Loralee Holton** of Burr Ridge! Loralee was unable to join us for the potluck, but hopes to become active in the coming months.

### **DATES FOR YOUR NEW 2011 CALENDAR:**

- On Tuesday evening, **January 18**, our LWV member Rick Blackwell will help us all better understand the challenges of delivering quality **healthcare** to the 10,000 inmates at **Cook County Jail**. Join us at 7:30 at the La Grange Public Library.
- On Saturday, **January 29** beginning at 9 a.m. at Betty Doig's, we'll be **reviewing, and voting on, our stance on issues** related to state and county government, natural resources, and social policy. To review our current positions ahead of the meeting, go to LWVIL and click on "issues." Then, for each identified issue area, click on "Full statement of where we stand on (specific issue)". This is an important time to understand and affirm our LWV positions, so please plan to join us!
- Then, thanks to our 1/29 issues briefing, we'll be well prepared for the **LWVIL Issues Briefing** coming up Saturday, **February 5**, again at University Center, 525 S. State. Kathy Rigg of Voices for Illinois Children will be a featured speaker, and afternoon seminars will focus on health care, redistricting, and pension reform.

We'll also be scheduling **interviews with our local state legislators** to learn their current positions on fiscal policy, climate change, immigration, and redistricting. Want to be on the interview team? Just give me a call.

Finally, I wish you a happy and healthy 2011!

Linda Christianson  
President

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**LWVIL Annual Issues Briefing - Saturday, February 5, 2011**  
**University Center - Conference Chicago - Lake Room**  
**525 South State Street · Chicago**  
**Registration deadline: Thursday, January 27, 2011**

### **Issues Program: New Governor - New Direction?**

A political analysis of where Illinois is headed with its deficit, backlog of bills, school funding, health and social services and other important issues (Panel: Kathy Ryg, Voices for Illinois Children, and others TBA)

### **Workshops** (*select one*)

- **Effective Ways to Lobby Springfield in 2011** (Panel: Lobbyists Paula Purdue, Larry Suffredin, Colette Kubiesa)
- **Redistricting: Where Do We Go From Here and How Do We Get There?** (Presenters: TBA)
- **Health Care Reform and Its Impact on Illinois?** (Julie Hamos, Director of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services)
- **Pension Reform. Is it possible? Probable?** (Nathan Anderson, UIC, Department of Economic and Institute of Government and Public Affairs)

# REGISTRATION FORM: Issues Briefing February 5, 2011

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ League: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 per person  
(Includes continental breakfast, lunch, briefing packet and workshop materials)

\_\_\_\_\_ MORNING Program only: \$35 per person  
(Includes continental breakfast and briefing packet)

\_\_\_\_\_ AFTERNOON Program only: \$40 per person  
(Includes lunch, briefing packet, and workshop materials)

Lobbying       Redistricting       Health Care Reform       Pension Reform

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE A VEGETARIAN LUNCH PLEASE CALL  
(312-939-5935 EXT. 37) OR EMAIL ([INFO@LWVIL.ORG](mailto:INFO@LWVIL.ORG)) THE OFFICE.**

**The League accepts Visa and MasterCard for your convenience.**

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature (required): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to LWVIL

Mail your registration form to:

League of Women Voters of Illinois  
332 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1150  
Chicago, IL 60604  
Attn: Issue's Briefing Registration

**TO REDUCE PAPER AND SAVE TIME YOU CAN REGISTER ONLINE AT [WWW.LWVIL.ORG](http://WWW.LWVIL.ORG)**

***LWVCC November Lunch and Learn***  
***Cook County Public Defender:***  
**“They Are the Guardians of Our Most  
Cherished Democratic Ideals”**

This is how Cook County Public Defender Abishi C. Cunningham, Jr. (retired Judge) described the people who work in the Public Defender’s Office at the November 15 *Lunch & Learn with the League* sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Cook County. But far too often, public defenders face questions such as “Why would you want to be part of that group?” and “How can you sleep at night?” when they are in social settings.

Judge Cunningham told the Lunch & Learn audience that fortunately for the people of Cook County, the people who work in the Public Defender’s Office are dedicated to the cause of making sure the legal system works, and they truly feel they have a calling. As a result, there is an amazingly low rate of turnover in the slightly over 700-person office that, besides attorneys, includes other professional and support staff, such as investigators. (Note that this total number is dramatically down from the 840 FTE positions in the years 2000-2004.) Many have been employed in the Office for 30 or more years.

The mission of the Office is to protect the rights and dignity of each person accused of a crime. Public Defenders are appointed by judges to represent those accused of a crime who cannot afford a private attorney. The staff works out of the Criminal Courts building at 26<sup>th</sup> and California (which members of the Cook County League toured several months ago) and the five suburban Cook County court houses and Juvenile Court. There is also a 37-member Elite Homicide Unit that defends indigent people accused of capital crimes, along with an Appellate Unit and a Forensic Science Division. Audience members were surprised to learn that the Public Defender’s Office has to pay for its own evidence tests, as well as ballistic and other experts. Where does the money come from? Us the taxpayers: mainly from Cook County government, though the State of Illinois also is supposed to supply the money for the Capital Litigation Trust to cover the costs of murder cases. However, as further evidence of the problems with State finances, the State is in arrears from 2009 and has paid nothing toward the amount owed for fiscal year 2010. (The County is covering the shortfall in the meantime.)

Judge Cunningham applauded the League for its efforts to repeal the death penalty. Aside from the moral issues, he stressed that there were millions of dollars more that are being spent on cases involving the death penalty that could be saved or spent more wisely to improve the justice system. Further, it costs the State of Illinois (and therefore the taxpayers) far more to pursue the death penalty than to house convicted murderers for life without parole.

Judge Cunningham, son of the first African American lawyer in West Virginia, was appointed by the President of Cook County to serve a 6-year term as the Public Defender in 2009. From 1986 until that time, he served as a judge in the Cook County Circuit Court, handling both criminal and civil cases. He has also had two separate stints in the State’s Attorney’s Office, as well as working in private practice and as an adjunct professor at both the DePaul and John Marshall Schools of Law. Judge Cunningham proudly told the audience that his sister is the presiding judge in the 6<sup>th</sup> district at Markham.

*Lunch & Learn with the League* is a series of fundraisers featuring speakers talking about different aspects of Cook County government. Proceeds are used to help pay for the operations of the League of Women Voters of Cook County, to which you, as a member of a local League within Cook County, automatically belong. Look for e-mail announcements for the spring *Lunch & Learn* early in 2011. And remember, you don’t need to be a League member to attend.

Like to learn more about the Cook County Public Defender’s Office? LWVCC member Pris Mims recommends reading *Defending the Damned* by journalist Kevin Davis from 2007.

**Be a part of one of the most effective and respected organizations in the country!**

**Looking for a way to make our communities and country better places to live? Want to meet interesting engaged fellow citizens who are studying the issues and working to make improvements?**

**Then join us! We are grassroots and non-partisan. The League of Women Voters: Where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.**

**Here is a partial list of what we do:**

- Register millions to vote
- Monitor government activities at local, county, state and national levels.
- Educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities
- Sponsor candidate debates and public issues forums
- Lobby and testify on issues that you care about and help put laws on the books

**What your dues include:**

- Membership in the League on all levels: local, Cook County, State of Illinois and National League.
- League publications, in-depth information on the issues, and Action Alerts
- Participation in our monthly programs, study, and discussion groups.
- The intangibles: rewarding friendships and working together with terrific people to make our communities strong and give everyone a voice in government.

**JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE LAGRANGE AREA!**

**(Already a member? Consider giving the gift of membership to a friend.)**

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Fill out this form and return it with your check to LWVLGA, P.O. Box 542, La Grange, IL 60525.

<b>Select membership category:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> \$65 Individual <input type="checkbox"/> \$32.50 Add 2 <sup>nd</sup> member same household <input type="checkbox"/> \$32.50 Student Member
Name:
Address:
Phone:
Email address:

For additional information about the League and how to get started, please contact our Membership Chair, Carolyn Norris, at carolynnorris@hotmail.com or 708-328-6177. We look forward to welcoming you to the League!

## Public Debate in the Age of Anger



*John Kass, Betsy Hart, Charles M. Madigan, Ann Serafin*



*John Kass, Betsy Hart, Charles M. Madigan, Ann Serafin*

The League of Women Voters of the La Grange Area hosted a provocative debate discussing the influence the media has on dictating issues broadcasted the public forum. Held at Lyons Township High School, over 150 interested citizens of all ages came to hear what Betsy Hart, John Kass and Charles M. Madigan had to say about the most recent election and all of the negative campaigning surrounding the election.

Charles M. Madigan, Presidential Writer in residence at Roosevelt University, talked about the unfortunate reality that negative campaigning sells. John Kass, Columnist for the Chicago Tribune promoted the written word as a source to stay well-informed. In response to a question from the audience, Mr. Kass encouraged people to pick up the phone and call a reporter to raise issues they want addressed. To ensure the reporter's undivided attention, he suggested that it is best to learn the reporter's schedule to avoid calling before a deadline. Nationally syndicated columnist, Betsy Hart, pointed out that negative campaigning can be beneficial when it brings to light relevant issues.

Moderator, Ann Serafin, encouraged questions from the audience. The discussions transcending from these questions were remarkable and informative. What was clear in this debate, people with divergent viewpoints can discuss an issue without getting nasty and unkind, something we should all strive for in this day of intense conflicting opinions on critical issues that affect our country, state, county, village, and family.





See inside for details

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 18th**

**7:30 PM**

***Driving Improved Healthcare Services at the Cook County Jail***

LaGrange Public Library, LaGrange

**SATURDAY, January 29<sup>th</sup>**

**9 AM**

***LWVLGA ISSUES REVIEW***

Betty Doig's House

108 S. Sunset, LaGrange

RSVP Please to [henkel77@sbcglobal.net](mailto:henkel77@sbcglobal.net)

**League of Women Voters  
of the LaGrange Area  
215 S. Brainard Avenue  
La Grange, IL 60525**

