



League of Women Voters LaGrange Area

March 2009

<u>IMPORTANT DATES</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
THURSDAY MAR 19th 7:15 PM	GREAT DECISIONS <i>The Artic Age</i>	1 st United Methodist Church 100 W. Cossitt Ave. LaGrange
MONDAY MAR 30th 7 - 8 PM 8:15 - 9:30 PM	SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUMS <i>DISTRICT 102</i> <i>DISTRICT 204</i>	Lyons Township High School Performing Arts Center 4900 S. Willow Springs Rd LaGrange
THURSDAY MAR 31st 7:30 PM	LWVLGA BOARD MEETING <i>ALL ARE WELCOME!!</i>	Krista Grimm's 558 N. Edgwood LaGrange Park
THURSDAY APR 9th 7:15 PM	GREAT DECISIONS <i>Egypt: Key Ally in the Middle East</i>	1 st United Methodist Church 100 W. Cossitt Ave. LaGrange
THURSDAY APRIL 16 th 10-11:30 AM	TOUR OF COOK COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY	<i>See Inside for Info</i> Must sign-up by Mar 31st

Newsletter Feedback

Members who receive the newsletter by email were recently asked to answer a survey about it. Anyone who received the newsletter by mail is also welcome to comment. What do you like best and least about the newsletter? How can it be improved or made more useful for you? Call or email Krista, or send a note, anonymously if desired, to LWV of the LaGrange Area, P O Box 542, LaGrange IL 60525.

Last Chance for Program Items

Issues are important to you! How can the LaGrange Area League get involved in those issues? If you have an idea and it fits with the positions of the League, suggest a study or project for the 2009-10 program year. If you aren't sure if it is appropriate, or you aren't sure what the League can do, call Krista or any Board member to discuss it. This is your last chance to submit proposals to the Board for consideration and potential approval at the 2009 Annual Meeting. But don't delay, proposals must be in by March 20.

The LWVLGA gratefully acknowledges the law firm of Golan & Christie, LLP and member Barb Yong for their services.

Newsletter Editor: Jean Klotter.....708/345-3912
LWV LaGrange Area website..... <http://lagrangearealwv.org/>

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

The Nominating Committee soon will be concluding its work and announcing the slate of candidates to fill the LaGrange Area League's board positions for the 2009-10 year. We are fortunate that our members are able to continue to give so generously of their time, as other Leagues sometimes have difficulty filling their boards. Many members serve as registrars or volunteer on an ad hoc basis for specific events such as the poll watching project, and we are grateful for these efforts, too.

However, a greater number of volunteers are needed for the smooth operation of our League, in jobs that do not require attendance at the monthly Board meetings. If you are able to commit several hours, you might be interested in one of the following volunteer opportunities for the next program year:

- Membership renewal coordinator—Send out and keep track of membership renewals, working with the Treasurer and the Membership Chair. Computer skills needed. Estimated time commitment: 15 hours (at your convenience) over 6 months, June through November.
- Development committee—Help Development Chair plan and carry out fundraising activities. Estimated time commitment: 15 hours over 9 months
- Hospitality committee—Plan and provide refreshments at public meetings. Estimated time commitment: 4-12 hours (depending on number of volunteers) over 9 months
- Program committee—Help the Program chair make arrangements and set up for meetings. Estimated time commitment: 12-16 hours, divided over 3 or 4 months
- Phone Tree Caller—Call members with important information. Estimated time commitment: 2 hours over 9 months
- Social committee—Help plan the annual holiday potluck and the annual meeting. Estimated time commitment: 4-6 hours around November and April-May

Please call or email me if you have questions about any of the jobs, or want to volunteer.

As I make this plea for our local League, I also want to encourage you to consider volunteer opportunities at the other levels of the League. All LaGrange Area members are also members of the Cook County League, Illinois League, Lake Michigan League, and the LWVUS. Personally, I've enjoyed getting to meet members from other areas, and learning about policy issues at these other levels as well.

Krista Grimm

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Nominating Committee is pleased to present the following candidates for election to the LWVLGA Board at the Annual Meeting in May:

PRESIDENT (2009-2011) – Linda Christianson
1st VICE PRESIDENT –Program-(2009-2010)-(to fill a vacancy) - Vera Fina
2nd VICE PRESIDENT – Membership – (2009-2011) – Carolyn Norris
TREASURER – (2009-2011) – Cynthia Schilsky
ELECTED DIRECTORS – (2009-2011)
Jean Klotter – Newsletter
Mary Klonowski – Voters Service
NOMINATING COMMITTEE – (2009-2010)
Velaine Carnall, Chair
Sally Mitchell, off board
Carolyn Norris, on board

Secretary Janice Miller and elected directors Lisa Den Besten and Patty Rocco will continue to serve the second year of their two year terms.

Respectfully submitted, Lorna Neuneker (Chair), Jeanine Jasica, Aileen Henkel

SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUMS A TRIPLE TREAT

With 4 candidates running for 3 seats on the District 102 School Board (elementary schools in parts of La Grange, La Grange Park and Brookfield) and 7 candidates running for 4 seats in District 204 (Lyons Township High School), the Voter Service Committee combined 2 forums into a single evening on Monday, March 30th. With those two treats available to you, we have scheduled a third: the forums will take place in the new, state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center at Lyons Township High School, South Campus.

Come to learn about the qualifications and views of the candidates. Broadly speaking, we will be asking the candidates about the financial outlook for their District, the impact of No Child Left Behind legislation, and the changing demographics of our Districts. Note in the flyer that citizens can send advance questions to us online. And, we will also have time to take questions from the audience. Take advantage of this triple treat: ask questions, become informed for your April 7th vote, and enjoy the surroundings. Consult the flyer for additional details.

Riverside Forum a Resounding Success

With more than 200 people in the audience and 40 questions for the candidates submitted online prior to the forum at Riverside Town Hall, we can confidently declare that the forum was a winner. The event featured 2 candidates for Village President and 7 candidates for the position of Trustee, with 3 to be elected. Speaker after speaker heaped accolades and appreciation for the La Grange Area League and The Riverside-Brookfield Landmark newspaper for making the forum happen. One gentleman told us that they had not had a comparable event since the early 1990's. Many, many citizens approached our Voter Service crew to thank us for cosponsoring and structuring the forum.

Hats off to Mary Lou Lowrey, who once again did an outstanding job as Moderator. Thanks also to our entire crew who conducted themselves professionally and enabled the forum to proceed smoothly: STOP sign wielders Laurie Braun and Emily Friel who were fearless timers, speed reader Krista Grimm who sorted questions from the audience and intrepid Lisa den Besten who facilitated questions from the audience.

Our experience in Riverside was a glimmer of hope amidst the sordid politics of Illinois government. Perhaps such enthusiastic voter interest in a local election will eventually assert itself in state elections.

Mary Klonowski, Voter Service Chair

OUR VERY OWN "CHARLIE ROSE"

On Monday, March 9th, Bob Klonowski did taped interviews with 6 candidates running for School Board in District 208 (Riverside-Brookfield High School). The interviews were held in the new TV Studio at the school. Candidates began by describing their qualifications, credentials and reasons for running for the School Board. They were then given one minute to respond to each of 5 questions. The format was structured by a group of citizens who asked us to moderate the interviews to take advantage of the League's reputation for nonpartisanship. With his LWV button firmly in evidence, Bob assured the viewers that he is, indeed, a member of the League, a great visual for getting the message across that the League of Women Voters is not for women only.

LWVIL EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

LaGrange Area Leaguer Cheryl Chapman is a member of the LWVIL Education Policy Committee. Everyone interested in education is encouraged to join the committee by contacting Chair Claire McIntyre at randymc@charter.net or talking to Krista. The next meeting is scheduled for April 13, 1 pm, at the LWVIL office in Chicago. Cheryl recently attended a symposium on education and shares her experience below.

On a crispy cold February morning in Chicago, hundreds of people active in their communities and schools came together for Voices for Illinois Children's symposium, "Illinois Kids Count 2009." The first hour was spent presenting a remarkable report, EDUCATION for the 21st Century. Go on line to www.voices4kids.org if you are interested in learning

more, or see Cheryl Chapman ccfritter@yahoo.com to borrow her copy. An overview of our 2 million Illinois school children was given, who they are, and where they go to school, what the programs are like for all ages. Amazing. Other topics researched under the general topic of schools included early childhood education, standards, assessment and accountability, teacher quality and demographics, conditions within schools (ratios, class sizes, etc.), and funding. My particular interest is in more equitable funding for our children; it was sobering to what a state crisis of funding we live in here in Illinois - and this was only through 2007

Next, we broke into various workshops, regarding the above topics, so I attended *School Finance*, run by Larry Joseph (Voices), Mary Ellen Guest (Consultant), Tom Johnson (Taxpayers Federation of Illinois), and a representative from Chicago Public Schools. Sadly, nobody had any good news to share, other than that Illinois is currently in a big crisis and sometimes in the midst of a crisis great opportunities evolve. Most likely, any "Stimulus Money" for education in Illinois will only serve to fill in what is lost, and not to start any new programs or actually improve anything. I also got the distinct impression that until we get a completely new legislature, educational funding in Illinois will *not* be moving forward.

Our fellow League member, Claire McIntyre, attended the *Assessment Session* and has these comments: It basically discussed the effects of teaching to the test - a lot of teaching time is lost prepping kids to take the test. This results in lower scores since students spend less time in learning analytical skills and new material as well as in teachers improving classroom instruction that engages student learning. Peter Mulhall focused on middle schools - the "weak link of American education," but basically his message was similar - standards have focused on what needs to be taught but not on how it's taught and the achievement data from the tests don't give teachers and their students what they need to know to do self-assessment and improve how students learn. He cited the Turning Points Model of 1989 that looked at using data for self-improvement. The third panelist was Jack Wuest, who works with alternative schools and drop-outs. He said that drop out rates are not being adequately identified, leaving the police to deal with the fallout. Not only do kids who drop out suffer the personal loss of earnings (around \$350,000 over their work lifetime less than high school graduates, which goes up as they're juxtaposed against those with college educations) but cost the taxpayers an average \$220,000. And, of course, there's the social cost. He quoted a study by Andy Sum from Northeastern University in Boston: Wuest said that when Reagan killed a lot of anti-poverty programs in the 80's, we lost two generations of kids. There was an enormous cost to society, taxpayers, and the kids themselves. The overall message of the workshop was that our current ESEA/NCLB mandated assessment methods don't work and echoed what the later speakers said; we need an integrated approach to education. Right now we have a conflict between assessment models - those who want year end data/accountability and those who want tests that will give teachers the tools they need to teach children and meet their needs.

Our keynote speaker at lunchtime was Richard Rothstein, author and consultant from the Economic Policy Institute. His speech, "A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education," (please visit the website www.boldapproach.org) was right on-target and well-received. As a recently retired teacher, I can tell you that his every word was gold, and if you get a chance to read his books, you should! His main point is that the No Child Left Behind framework of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is totally impractical, but that it has served to shine a flashlight on what is happening to the children our systems are leaving behind. Did you know that at many junior colleges, 90% of the students test *into* "remedial" reading and math classes? What a waste of college tuition, for something that should have been seen to in high school. By the way, "systems" is plural because of all the research showing that schools alone cannot narrow the achievement gap. A broader approach needed? Absolutely!

1. School improvements - not through testing and sanctions but through smaller class sizes at the early grades, getting the best teachers into the most challenging schools, coordinating curriculum from pre-school through high school (maybe have less than 877 school districts in Illinois?), and special attention to many of the disaggregated groups ESEA/NCLB currently measures. Accountability is important, but ISATs and most other state tests are woeful! A version of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, along with other measures, *consistent throughout America*, is what is needed. Otherwise, ISAT scores rise, but NAEP achievement remains the same or falls. And kids pay the price.

2. Increase investment in developmentally appropriate and high quality early childhood, pre-school, and kindergartens. Illinois ranks #4 in the nation in this, so we are at least on the way!
3. Increase investment in health services. Research shows that the routine health care, medical and dental, that middle class Americans used to take for granted virtually works miracles at improving children's school performance! I used to work in schools where school nurses and social workers were part-time commodities; I'd be amazed to see Rothstein's proposals for full-time health clinics serving school families within a school - what a great idea!
4. Pay more attention to where students spend their time out of school. Realize that students need real-life experiences - sports, games, trips, culture, enrichment of all kinds, far more than NCLB's remedial tutoring in order to make it in life.

Overall, Rothstein advocated totally dismantling NCLB as it is, and beginning again. He reframed the circumstances under which it was first approved (post 9-11 panic) to further justify moving from a numbers-based model of educational improvement to a more humane, research-based, and effective model. Read his books!

The day ended with another panel of people speaking to the future of education in Illinois. From a funding point of view, I was especially intrigued with speaker Cheryle Jackson, the first female head of the Chicago Urban League. They have put together a lawsuit saying that Illinois' inequitable educational funding practices (we are #48 in the USA) violate the civil rights of the children in this state. Keep an eye on that issue!

Overall, it was an interesting, yet sobering day. There is crisis; there is hope.

Doing a Happy Dance—Report from the Great Lakes Lobby Day

The Lake Michigan League of Women Voters (www.lmilo.org) is a member of the Healing our Waters-Great Lakes (HOW) Coalition and supports increased federal efforts and funding for restoring and protecting Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes. On February 24, LaGrange Area Leaguer Krista Grimm, a board member of the Lake Michigan League, traveled to Washington D.C., for the 4th annual Great Lakes Day. The HOW Coalition had more than 120 citizen activists representing all of the eight Great Lakes states attending the event, including 5 League members (4 from Illinois).

For the first time ever, staff of the Administration participated in the event! Newly installed US EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and Council on Environmental Quality Director Nancy Sutley addressed the Coalition members and reaffirmed President Obama's commitment to the Great Lakes and to all of the "Great Waters" efforts nationally. The day ended with a party at the Canadian where speakers included the Canadian Ambassador and Congressman Jim Oberstar.

The Illinois delegation was smaller than usual this year, but still managed to visit the offices of the congressmen from the Lake Michigan basin, and Senator Durbin's office.

As Coalition members descended on Capitol Hill, good news for the Great Lakes was beginning to filter out from the White House. The President's budget included \$475 million dollars of restoration funding for the Great Lakes, exceeding the expectations of the lobbying delegation! In addition, \$3.9 billion for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs was included in the budget to fund projects like water treatment facilities, replacement of aging water pipes, and separation of combined sewers—projects that are both good for the environment and which will create construction jobs. All of this was in addition to funding included in the stimulus bill, of which more than \$1 billion could come to the Great Lakes.

This is an enormous victory for the efforts of the Healing Our Waters Coalition, which the LWV of the LaGrange Area and Lake Michigan League have supported for years. Participants were giddy! League members may be asked to call their legislators very soon to support clean water funding as the budget moves through Congress.

First Call for Delegates

The LaGrange Area League needs to send members as delegates to the annual business meetings of the Cook County and Illinois Leagues. In exchange for doing some preparatory reading, your registration fees will be covered by the League, and you will have the opportunity to learn more about what the Leagues are doing.

The LWVCC meeting will be held at Brookfield Zoo on Monday, May 18, at 9:30 am. After the meeting, lunch will be served and Anita Alvarez will speak. The LWVIL convention will be held June 12 - 14 in East Peoria, necessitating spending at least one night in the hotel. If you are able to serve our League as a delegate to either meeting, please contact Krista.

Observer Reports Have Moved to a New Site

The LWV of Cook County has a long tradition of monitoring the Cook County Board and related governmental bodies through its Observer Corps. Currently, observers are focusing on the Cook County Board, the Health and Hospital System Board, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board, and soon will add the Advisory Board of the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center to the list. An archive of observer reports is available at the LWVCC website, <http://cookcounty.il.lwvnet.org/>. Since January, 2009, and going forward, observer reports are posted on the LWVCC's new blog, accessible through a link on the website, or directly at <http://www.cookcountyobserver.blogspot.com/>. You may subscribe to the blog if you use an RSS Feed Reader by clicking on the "Subscribe to Posts" button on the lower right of the blog site. Please also consider bookmarking the LWVCC website as well as the blog site, as this will increase the Google rankings of both.

TOUR OF COOK COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY THURSDAY, APRIL 16th

Newspaper headlines. ACLU suits. Court monitors. Abuse allegations. Administration changes. Union fights. Drug abusers. Young murderers. And just plain kids who got in trouble.

All this at the JTDC (Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center), the place where county youths are taken to determine if they are delinquent.

For an inside look at this facility, come to the League of Women Voters of Cook County tour of the detention center and the school (Chicago Public) which is there to teach the hundreds of children who are detained there. Hear the experts. Bring your questions.

Thursday, April 16, 2009
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Sign up by March 31.
The tour is limited to 24, and for a security check, names must be given to the Center by April 1.

Want to join us for lunch afterwards? We're going to Greek Islands.

If you are interested, have questions, or want to sign up, e mail Millie Juskevice: millie@juskevice.com or (after 3/13) call 773-493-2442.

NEWS UPDATE FROM LWVUS

LWVUS 2009 Legislative Priorities

The Board announced that Global Climate Change and Health Care will be the top tier legislative priorities for the upcoming year. Top priority issues are those on which major congressional action is expected and on which the League will seek to be an active player. Tier two priorities are Election Reform and DC Voting Rights. Visit www.lwv.org to view

all the issues we are watching and to read more about how and why the League prioritizes issues for advocacy to ensure meaningful impact and opportunity for progress.

Board Develops Recession Roadmap at Winter Meeting

Part of the LWVUS Board's plan for leading the League through the national recession and recovery period includes two decisions that change longstanding features of the League. First, the Board voted to hold a "virtual" Council in June 2009, rather than an "in-person" meeting. Second, they decided to suspend publication of *The National Voter* magazine, both paper and digital, until the League's finances are healthier. Prohibitive publication costs in a time of necessary budget cutbacks were cited as reasons for this action.

DC Voting Rights Bill Heads to House and Stalls

The District of Columbia Voting Rights Act of 2009 cleared the US Senate (S. 160) in late February on a strong vote. Leaders in the House of Representatives had scheduled their votes for Thursday, March 5, but the vote has been postponed. Opponents of the bill are attempting to derail it using an amendment that would repeal DC's gun laws. LWVUS President Mary Wilson is hopeful that 2009 may finally be the year that DC citizens will achieve voting representation in Congress. In a statement urging House support for HR. 157, she said, "Citizens living in our nation's capital have not been treated fairly for more than 200 years. The League calls on our elected members of Congress to finally correct this injustice". Check the League website often for the latest updates on this critical legislation.

Health Care Education Task Force Update

The LWV Education Fund Board approved the Task Force's proposal for educating our members and the public on various health care topics. First, the Task Force will prepare a series of fact sheets on health care in America, followed by in-depth articles, on selected related topics, to provide current information on the five areas of the League's health care position. The first series of fact sheets will be available this Spring. Check back here for further updates!

"The State of Climate Change" Video Available Online

The LWVUS 2008 Convention panel "The State of Climate Change—What We Know and What We Don't" is now available online. The discussion reviewed our state of knowledge on climate change and its impact on the developing world.

LWVEF to Co-Host Sunshine Week National Dialogue

The 4th Annual Sunshine Week event will be held Friday, March 20 from 1-2:30 p.m. eastern at the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC. The event will be available via webcast and will feature panels of experts from inside and outside government, who will discuss federal openness policies and opportunities for people to use government information to make a difference in their communities. For more information, visit www.openthegovernment.org. Sunshine Week (March 15-21) is a nationwide initiative to draw attention to the importance of open government and freedom of information.

League Calls on FEC to Follow Law

The League and coalition partners called on the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to follow the law in issuing regulations to implement campaign finance legislation. The letter also points out the structural problems with the agency and that President Obama has the ability to change the nomination process for FEC commissioners to provide for a better-functioning agency.

NPV Compact Consensus Study Update

The criteria detailed by LWVUS for determining a valid consensus on the National Popular Vote Compact includes the participation by at least one-third of the LWVUS local Leagues, and will depend upon agreement of two-thirds of those participating local Leagues. All Leagues are to submit their reports by the May 1st deadline. Until the final consensus has been announced, the results of any local League's consensus meetings cannot be made public. As stated in the Leader's Guide, "A local League's consensus on a national issue does not constitute a final LWVUS position and should not be publicized".

Judicial Campaign Spending Argued Before U.S. Supreme Court

On March 3rd the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Caperton v. Massey*, a case that weighs the influence of campaign spending in state court elections with judicial independence. The League of Women Voters joined an amicus brief in this case that calls for the Supreme Court to both preserve judicial impartiality and reform judicial selection.

March is Women's History Month—Commemorate and Celebrate!

REALLY IMPORTANT EVENTS

(See inside for details)

THURSDAY, MARCH 19th

7:15 PM

Great Decisions

First United Methodist Church

100 W. Cossitt Ave., LaGrange

MONDAY, MARCH 30TH

7-9:30 PM

Lyons Township High School, South Campus

4900 S. Willow Springs Road

THURSDAY, APRIL 16TH

10-11:30 AM

Tour of Cook County Juvenile Detention Facility

Must sign up by March 31st

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

