



THE VOTER

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IMPORTANT DATES

Jan 12. Board Meeting
Noon. McClure Library.

Jan 14. Orientation
6-7pm North Branch
Library

**Jan 17. Gen Meeting &
breakfast** 9am. IFT
offices

**Feb 5. "Coal & Clean
Power Plan"** 6:30pm
West Peoria City Hall

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

So many things to do in a new year. Yes, trying new things is usually on my list. Our League is as strong as we have broad member participation. Please join us for (light) breakfast and two part meeting on Saturday, January 17 at 9am and Mary Jane Crowell will lead us in review of our LWVIL (state) positions. As a group we will suggest whether to retain, update, or drop 26 positions. If our League suggests changes, we need to be prepared to work on those efforts and provide support toward doing that.

After that review (about 9:30) we will hold our consensus meeting regarding the Charter School Study. The committee, chaired by Jan Deissler and Hedy Elliott, will lead us through our study questions to update our LWVIL Charter Schools position. Please take the time to read through the questions and use the LWVIL website as a resource for information. Committee members will help answer questions at the Jan 17 meeting, but they do not lead us to a conclusion, the members do. During consensus meetings, non-members do not participate.

A strength of our Peoria League has been an active Observer Corps. We have several governmental units we would like to cover, but need additional Observers. (Please see partial listing of meeting times.) Greater Peoria League will soon start planning for our 2015-16 League year. We need help on program planning, budget, nominations, socials, Observer Committee, and fundraising. If you have time to help, please call me, 253-9594.

Can you recommend a good speaker for our April dinner? Several topics have been suggested, but who would you like to hear speak at our dinner? Call me with your suggestions, please, 253-9594.

This is our first year doing Drinks & Dialogue on the third Wednesday at 5:30 at Kellehers. Some evenings have been better attended than others. Everyone joins the conversation with the presenter so it is more personal than our regular meetings. Join us. Some of us stay for dinner. Big thanks to Pat Landes for coordinating this. *(continued)*

(President's Message, continued.)

Did you see that one of our November speakers, Bartonville Police Chief Brian Fengel, has been appointed to a presidential advisory committee which recommends candidates for the Medal of Valor. Our November meeting focused on "Alternatives to Incarceration" with Chief Fengel and Circuit Judge Kevin Lyons.

Our February 5 meeting speaker is Andrew Armstrong an attorney with the Environmental Law and Policy Center in Chicago. He is an expert on the Clean Power Plan. (West Peoria City Hall at 6:30pm.)

Our League is partnering with NAACP, ACLU, and other organizations to celebrate the 50th anniversary of President Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act on August 6. If you want to help with planning, call or email me. c_budzinski@hotmail.com.

-- Cheryl Budzinski

The League's Mission

Why have state and national positions in League? Before League can take action, members must agree in broad terms on what they think about the various aspects of a public policy issue - the League position. One of two methods to determine member agreement is the consensus process: CONSENSUS IS A PROCESS WHEREBY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN A GROUP DISCUSSION OF AN ISSUE.

The accord reached by the group is not a simple majority, nor unanimity, but rather the overall sense of the group. It is a dynamic process. The discussion evokes an exchange of ideas, area of agreement evolve and opinions crystallize. *from League Consensus Meeting. Reaching Member Agreement (LWVIL)*

League of Women Voters of Illinois Program Planning Process/ Charter Schools Consensus

LWVGP meeting at 9 am on Saturday, January 17, 2015, IFT Office, 733 SW Washington, Peoria. Coffee and simple breakfast served.

Where We Stand 2013-2015 is the platform of League of Women Voters of Illinois, our statewide organization in which all local Leaguers are automatically members. Our national platform is called **Impact on Issues**. Those two position documents are the basis for all action taken by the league on state and national issues. In January each year we look at those positions- state positions in odd number years in order to have input and prepare for our June 2015 state convention.

Since 2013 we have been working on:

- Action Foci that were identified at 2013 convention (redistricting reform, graduated income tax, climate change, gun violence prevention).
- Currently working on Charter School Study which you will participate in on January 17 also.
- Fracking issue was a Will of Convention issue that is being worked on.

We are going to hear short reviews of our positions. We can make recommendations to retain, drop, or restudy/update any of our state positions. (Seldom is a position dropped, most are retained.) You can read the short summary of issues or you may go to Where We Stand (on the website) and read deeply. Do come prepared to ask questions, make suggestions, voice your opinions. We are the grassroots! All the local Leagues turn in one "response form" to LWVIL. If we want to consider changing or adding a position, we must also be willing to make a commitment to work on that and state our available resources for the work.

The LWVIL Board will consider what was suggested and put together an "Action Focus" list for 2015-16 and budget for the work. That list will be presented at our state convention June 6-7, 2015 where the program will be set for the next 2 years. Our League usually sends 4 delegates to LWVIL convention.

<http://www.lwvil.org/where-we-stand.html> for the full version of Where We Stand.

-- Cheryl Budzinski

CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING ISSUES

Charter schools are public schools that are funded by local, state, and federal tax dollars based on their enrollment. Private fundraising is used to acquire additional money. Originally, charter schools were granted budgetary autonomy in exchange for educational results. Currently Illinois has 64 charter schools on 143 campuses. Student enrollment is nearly 60,000; this is 3% of Illinois students.

The state of IL currently funds schools at approximately 89% of \$6,119 per pupil or \$5,445.91. Local property tax dollars and Corporate Property Replacement Tax dollars are then subtracted from the \$5,445.91. Peoria District 150 receives 19% of their revenue from General State Aid while Dunlap received only 3.6 % of their revenue in 2013 from General State Aid. Federal monies are then added as a supplement; they cannot be used in lieu of local or state monies. District 150 receives approximately \$28 million in federal money. Dunlap school district receives \$1.1million in federal funds.

Charter schools are funded in basically three ways. Eight states use a system whereby the per pupil state and federal dollars based on a student's local school district follows the student to a charter school. If District A spends \$9,000 per pupil, the \$9,000 follows Johnny or Susie to the charter school they attend instead of their home district public school. This type of formula means that the charter school receives different amounts for students. If a student comes from a high tax rate district then the charter school receives more money.

The second and most common method for funding charter schools is based on the per pupil revenue rate of the authorizer—the public school district that authorized the charter school within its borders. From 75% to 125% of the public school's per pupil revenue is sent to the charter school. This is the system District 150 and Quest Academy use. So 85% of District 150's per pupil revenue rate is sent to Quest Academy for each student who attends Quest rather than enroll in a district public school. Quest is currently asking that the ratio be changed to 90%.

Approximately 5 states and the District of Columbia use a statewide formula to fund charter schools. The same funding ratio is used regardless of whether the charter school is in an urban setting or a rural one. This system often leads to less per pupil funding in urban charter schools. In Minnesota, for example, urban charters receive 13% less revenue than the urban public school district in which the charter school is located. This method often serves as a disincentive to create charter schools in high need areas. Because Illinois does not provide equitable funding for its traditional public schools, charter school funding is also disparate. Illinois is studying alternate approaches to funding her charter schools.

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/scsc/pdf/csftf-final-report.pdf>
<ftp://ftpfinance.isbe.net/AFR/2013/School%20Districts/>

Consensus Questions on LWVIL Charter Schools position/ do you disagree or agree?

For what should charter schools be held accountable?

1. **The reasons for revoking or not renewing a charter should include that the school:**
 - A. Failed to meet content standards, pupil performance standards or school climate standards.
 - B. Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management (current law)
 - C. Violated any provision of state or federal law from which the charter school was not exempted (current law)
 - D. Exceeded student expulsion rates or attrition rates of district schools
 - E. Discriminated against students based on family economics, disability, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services
 - F. Employed fewer than 90% teachers who are fully certified (would require a change in the law from the current 75% requirement for most charter schools)

- G. Interfered with union organizing
- H. Used curriculum or instruction that failed to maintain the separation of church and state
- I. Failed to admit students throughout the year as space became available
- J. Failed to enforce truancy laws

How often should charter schools be held accountable for charter renewal?

- 2. Existing charter schools should be evaluated in incremental periods:**
 - A. not to exceed 5 years for purposes of charter renewal
 - B. not to exceed 10 years for purposes of charter renewal

Who should hold charter schools accountable?

- 3. The authority for approving and renewing charters should reside in:**
 - A. A body which has been elected to oversee spending of taxpayer dollars (e.g., school districts outside of Chicago)
 - B. A body which has been appointed by a mayor (e.g., Chicago Public School Board)
 - C. The Illinois State Board of Education, which is appointed by the governor
 - D. A State Charter School Commission nominated by the governor and appointed by the Illinois State Board of Education.
- 4. Local voters should be able through referendum to:**
 - A. Establish a proposed charter school (current law)
 - B. Override a decision by the Charter Commission which reverses the decision of a local school board.

TRANSPARENCY

- 5. Like other public schools, charter schools should be subject to:**
 - A. Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest of members of the governing board
 - B. Disclosure of sources of revenue
 - C. Disclosure of salaries and benefit packages
 - D. Disclosure of the identity of the owner of any property and buildings
 - E. Disclosure of admission processes

FUNDING

- 6. Since charter schools receive public funding:**
 - A. Subcontracting most of the management of a school to a for-profit organization should be prohibited
 - B. When a student transfers between traditional public and charter schools, funding for that pupil should be prorated and transferred in a timely fashion
 - C. All property, equipment, and materials purchased by a school with public dollars should be surrendered to the local district if the school closes for any reason
- 7. Adequate and equitable funding for charter schools:**
 - A. Should be accomplished without financial harm to traditional public schools in the district.
- 8. In some cases, charter schools provide virtual education through computers off-site and the students do not need to attend a bricks and mortar school.**
 - A. This is not appropriate for elementary aged students except in rare circumstances
 - B. For high school students, funding should be based on actual costs rather than the same level of funding provided to other charter schools.

ELEMENTS OF THE CURRENT LWVIL POSITION

- 9. Does the League membership still support these statement from the 2001 position?**
 - A. The advantages of charters largely outweigh the disadvantages.
 - B. An area of opportunity resulting from charter schools is innovation.
 - C. An area of opportunity resulting from charter schools is increased parental choice.

NOTE: The LWVIL position regarding charter schools is intended to apply as well to contract schools in Chicago. Contract schools are public schools which, like charter schools, are operated by private entities under contract

with Chicago Public Schools, but are subject to more of the operating rules of traditional Chicago public schools, such as union membership for teachers.

Our responses to each LETTERED question will be “yes,” “no,” or “no consensus.” We also can make additional comments at the end of the response sheet. (There is one response sheet from each local League participating.)

Campaign financing topic of League D&D program on Jan. 21

The U.S. Supreme Court’s “Citizens United” ruling and campaign funding will be discussed at “Drinks & Dialogue,” a new program launched this year by the League. The public is invited to participate in the dialogue, at **5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 21 at Kelleher’s, 619 SW Water St., Peoria.**

There’s no cost to participate, and refreshments are available to buy.

The dialogue about secret, or “dark,” money and the impact on the democratic process will be opened with comments from Bill Knight, an award-winning Peoria journalist, and facilitated by League members. Drinks & Dialogue provides an opportunity for people to share opinions and ideas, ask questions and become more aware of local, state and national issues and **the options for making change.**

A Great New Year’s Resolution: Making Democracy Work!

As you draft and start executing resolutions for the new year, consider adding one that could give you personal satisfaction and make a difference in your community and country – discover the many opportunities presented by the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria. Find out how you can help the League make democracy work by attending a presentation at **6 – 7 pm Wednesday, January 14, 2015 at the Peoria Public Library North Branch, 3001 W. Grand Parkway, Peoria, IL.**

This presentation is geared for both prospective and existing members. So please plan on attending and bring someone who may be interested in our work. If you are a new member, you’ll get an idea of just how we make democracy work. If you are a seasoned member, you will enjoy a refresher course and just may find out something new!

As a reminder, the League is the organization where your hands on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Men and women over the age of 18 from Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford counties are welcome to join this unique, nonpartisan, issues-oriented, volunteer, member-directed organization. The League is committed to open, responsive, and effective government brought about by informed, involved citizens.

The League’s chief goal is to make democracy work for all citizens in federal, state, and local government decisions. Members can choose their own level of involvement from the many opportunities to discover new interests, learn about local candidates and crucial issues in our community and country, or to simply lean more about how government works. For more information, contact Pat Landes, Membership Chair, landes.pat@gmail.com or 309-648-3504.

FUNDRAISER SUCCESS: A big thank you to everyone who came and participated in our Fall Fundraiser, November 5 at Fresh Market at Westlake. Fresh Market was very generous with their wine and the food they prepared. Everyone attending got a \$5 store coupon and a chance to win a \$25 gift certificate. League member Mike McCuskey won the gift certificate. Reports are that everyone had a good time. The donations were tax deductible through our Education Fund. I talked with Fresh Market and they said they would be more than happy to work with us again. Our survey at the event indicated "immigration" is the hot topic among those attending, closely followed by "redistricting reform" and "criminal justice." I want to thank the committee, Terri Campion and Cheryl Budzinski, for all the work they did on the event. Our net profit for the Education Fund was \$1245, with some more checks still coming in. -- Carol Hedeman

Our League Needs Observers...do you have time and interest? See the list on our website of meetings and events that need observers or call Cheryl. Observer reports are also on the website. Also there: Illinois League positions in brief.



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

623 W. Stratford, Peoria, IL 61614

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ON THE WEB:

www.lwvqp.org

IMPORTANT DATES

Jan 12. Mon, noon Board meeting, McClure Library, 315 W. McClure, Peoria, IL.

Jan 14. Wed, 6 – 7 pm, Orientation Meeting, Peoria Public Library North Branch, 3001 W. Grand Parkway, Peoria, IL.

Jan. 17. Sat, 9 am, Planning and Charter School Consensus Meeting, IFT offices, 733 SW Washington St., Peoria, IL.

Jan. 21. Wed, 5:30 pm, Drinks & Dialogue, Citizens United opinion and campaign financing, Kelleher's, 619 SW Water St., Peoria, IL.

Jan. 27. Tues, noon LOGO at McClure Library

Feb. 5. Thurs, 6:30 pm, General Meeting, Clean Power, West Peoria City Hall, 2506 W Rohmann Ave, at Sterling, West Peoria, IL.

April 7. Consolidated Election.

June 6-7. Illinois LWV Convention.