



THE VOTER

Volume 68, Issue 9

Oct. 2015

Board of Directors

Cheryl Budzinski, President
309/253-9594
c_budzinski@hotmail.com

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Newsletter editor,
Elaine Hopkins
ehopkins7@prodigy.net

IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 1. Local Government Consolidation/Unfunded Mandates,
6 pm, AMT, Peoria.

Oct. 21. School Finance.
Drinks & Dialogue, 5:30 p.m. Hearth Restaurant, Peoria Heights.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

An interesting topic and speaker takes place on **October 1: Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force.**

Brian Costin, Policy Director for Lt. Governor Sanguinetti, will speak about the work of the Task Force and will answer questions. A speaker at one of the Task Force meetings spoke about the successful effort in Evanston to dissolve its township. This has projected savings of over \$1 million in 2015 and provides those services (previously done at the Township) through their Health Department. Their overhead was at 40% as is Peoria Township's. (Peoria Township raises about \$2.5 million from real estate taxes.) Questions will be taken from the audience on index cards such as we do at candidate forums.

Thank you to **Jim Thomas** who presented information on "*Transparency in Campaign Finance*." Discussion included the ways citizens can find information on candidates and campaign finances and ways the information is hidden. Jim suggested interested citizens can volunteer at "VoteSmart" headquartered in Montana. Information is available at: "flackcheck.org"; "factcheck.org"; "VoteSmart.org"; "www.elections.il.gov", and "FEC.gov"

Cindi Canary, Director of Independent Map Amendment was very interesting. Three local Leaguers to thank for turning in over 1,000 signatures are: LWVGP Chair Gary Stella, Bill Mahl our volunteer coordinator with Sherry Hillman. Thank you to all our volunteers. See www.mapamendment.org
Regarding ReDistricting, Brad McMillan has arranged for Colleen Mathis (formerly of Peoria, IL) to speak at 7pm on Oct 22 at Westlake Hall auditorium. She chairs the new Arizona Independent Redistricting Committee whose case was decided favorably for Independent Redistricting Reform by the U.S. Supreme Court in August 2015. The speech is open to the public.

From Drinks & Dialogue, speaker/Leaguer /Peoria City Councilperson **Beth Jensen** is a great example of an elected official dedicated to transparency. She feels the "at large" councilperson offers the broader perspective that can very often compliment the goals of the district representative and the citizens they **ALL** represent.

Join us the third Wednesday of the month for Drinks & Dialogue.

Do you have suggestions to encourage the League's members to participate more and/or step into leadership positions? We are looking for some new ideas on the Membership and Leadership Committee of our League. There is an article in this issue. Call Pat 648-3504 or Farrell 696-3217 - new or seasoned Leaguers can help. Thanks.

-- Cheryl Budzinski, President

"VoteSmart" - we all hope everyone does. If your candidate won, you may think the electors voted smart.

Elliott Murray has volunteered twice for Project VoteSmart which has a lot of information about elected officials, their campaign finances, how they voted on bills in Congress, ratings by different groups, speeches, issues, etc.

Member volunteers for VoteSmart sign up for 2 weeks at the Great Divide Ranch paying expenses to get there and a small amount for food. College students sign up for 10 weeks and must pay their expenses to get there and for any shopping or outings on weekends/evenings- no cost for room and board.

Much of the work is on computers, but also cooking, cleaning, etc. Elliott first volunteered there with his late wife Dorothy. He went back three years ago also. He said it was a good experience helping to record valuable information which is double or triple checked before publication. The work is done mostly by volunteers. It is a non-partisan organization.

I could tell he really enjoyed it. He hadn't seen bear or big cats, but saw elk on his early morning walks before work. Check it out at: www.votesmart.org -- Cheryl Budzinski League@lwgvp.org

Voter Service Committee

We are organized as a committee of 7 members. Our year has started off delightfully as 8 Leaguers registered 42 newly naturalized citizens recently. We registered 33 students on National Voter Registration Day at ICC North campus and East Peoria campus.

We will conduct the election of Sterling Towers Board for PHA on Oct 8.

-- Mary Jane Crowell



LEAGUE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE. Recycling, genetically modified food labeling, solar energy, coal plants - what is your environmental issue? Some of our League's best attended meetings last year were about those topics. Are you willing to work on the environmental committee for the League? email Joyce at joblumen@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your support!

We appreciate the financial contributions from all our members, and want to acknowledge our 2015/16

Susan B. Anthony members:

- ♦ Beth Akeson
- ♦ Farrell Davies
- ♦ Mary McDade
- ♦ Sonni & Dick Williams
- ♦ Katherine Coyle
- ♦ Michael McCuskey
- ♦ Kathie Raeborn
- ♦ Cheryl & Ron Budzinski
- ♦ Pat Landes
- ♦ Irene Pritzker
- ♦ Shirley Belke
- ♦ Jan & Emil Deissler
- ♦ Elliott Murray
- ♦ Sherry Hillman

Invitation to join the MLD Committee

Yes, another acronym; this one for Membership & Leadership Development Committee

GREAT NEWS! We are the fastest growing League in the state with a whopping 55 new members in the last 15 months for a net growth of 63%.

HOW DID WE DO IT? The LWVUS has established a Membership & Leadership Development (MLD) program to address recent nationwide membership growth challenges. The program, anchored with monthly coaching sessions and supported with a MLD Handbook, has been successful. Across the country LWVUS reports that coached Leagues have an average growth of 1.34% as compared to non-coached Leagues at 0.3%. Our coaching sessions, teamed with strong Board support and an active Membership Committee, have resulted in our amazing growth.

WHAT'S NEXT? Although we are pleased with the influx of new members, we are aware that we need to do a better job for orientation and engagement, plus make sure there are opportunities for leadership growth for members and the Board. The existing Membership Committee is being expanded to leadership development and will be meeting in the next few months to further develop our plan for MLD.

JOIN US. MLD meeting times will be designed to accommodate all committee members' schedules. No prior knowledge of the subject matter (or the League) is necessary, and we promise limited, focused meetings to make the best use of our time.

CONTACT Contact Committee Co-Chairs Farrell Davies (309-696-3217 or farrelldavies2@gmail.com) or Pat Landes (309-648-3504 or landes.pat@gmail.com) if you are interested or have any questions

Get Ready for the Constitutional Amendment Consensus Meeting!

WHY SHOULD YOU ATTEND OR CARE? We hear it all the time – we should amend the Constitution and fix whatever the issue is. We are asked on social media and by organizations to support a constitutional amendment for some political and/or social issue. But do you ever think about how and when an amendment to our US Constitution is warranted? Well, that's what the **November 5 meeting at 6 pm, AMT building near the corner of Sterling & Nebraska.**

At this meeting you get to see firsthand how the League is member-directed, a true grass-roots organization with policy positions established from the bottom up, not the top down. All of us will hear some background information, and then discuss and reach consensus (member agreement) on a series of questions related to circumstances that might allow or compel the League to endorse a constitutional amendment or Article V Constitutional Convention.

The outcome, based on input from Leagues all over the country, will be a national policy position on evaluation guidelines, process criteria, and how the guidelines and criteria should be used in overall context of any proposed amendment.

BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, SHOULD I STILL COME?

Well join the club. Most of us don't remember much from high school civics or working on the ERA amendment decades ago. Luckily you don't have to do any research before the meeting; however, the LWVUS has provided materials that you can read ahead of the meeting or hear a summary of at the meeting. The only 3 documents we will be using at the meeting are accessible at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/constitutional-amendment-study>

- There is a great study guide (4th document on site listed above) that is too long to include in the VOTER. Would recommend reading the first two pages, and then when you read the rest of it, which are the consensus questions we'll answer at the November 5 meeting, suggest you read the Point of View for each question first. Note that we will post the questions in the November VOTER and have copies for everyone at the meeting.

- The LWVUS has also provided synopses of 2 articles.
 - The first article (5th document on the site listed above) was published in the VOTER last month – Synopsis of “Constitutional Amendments and the Constitutional Common Law” which says we should not be predisposed against using an Article V constitutional amendment process, a constitutional convention.
 - The second article (6th document on the site listed above) is published in the VOTER this month - Synopsis of “Constitutional Amendmentitis” and says that there are strong structural reasons for amending the Constitution only reluctantly and as a last resort.

WHAT'S NEXT? You can do some light reading of the study guide and/or synopses of 2 articles, or you can just plan on attending and participating in the consensus questions at the November 5 meeting, 6 pm at AMT (Advance Medical Transport), corner of Sterling & Nebraska, enter at the doors facing Nebraska. The meeting is going to be great and will be presented by all newer members – Dick Williams, Sherry Hillman, Farrell Davies, and Marcus Fogliano.

Hope to see you there! Any questions, please contact Pat Landes, 309-648-3504 or landes.pat@gmail.com.

Reading for this month: Synopsis of “Constitutional Amendments and the Constitutional Common Law”

Prepared by the LWVUS Study Committee on Constitutional Amendments, July, 2015

This short paper presents a synopsis of the article, “Constitutional Amendmentitis,” by Kathleen Sullivan that first appeared in the December 19, 2001, issue of [The American Prospect](http://prospect.org), <http://prospect.org/article/constitutional-amendmentitis> (accessed 6/19/2015).

Writing in 2001, Sullivan notes a flurry of activity, with more Constitutional amendment proposals active then (and now) than at any time since the 1970s. The Constitution is very difficult to amend. Of the 11,000 amendments that have been proposed since the Constitution was adopted, only 27 have actually passed.

As a result, the Constitution remains a “relatively pristine document.”

Those that have passed have little altered the overall structure of the Constitution. According to Sullivan:

The first ten amendments, the Bill of Rights, were added in one fell swoop by the First Congress and ratified in 1791 as part of a bargain that had induced reluctant states to ratify the Constitution. And the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, which abolished slavery and gave African Americans rights of equal citizenship, were essentially foisted on the southern states by the Reconstruction Congress as a condition of readmission to the union in the wake of the Civil War.

The remaining amendments have tinkered little with the original constitutional design. Four expanded the right to vote in federal elections: The 15th Amendment eliminated racial classifications in voting, the 19th extended the franchise to women, the 24th abolished the poll tax, and the 26th lowered the voting age. Only two tried outright to govern social policy: The 18th Amendment imposed Prohibition and the 21st repealed it. Only two amendments worked significant structural changes in the original constitutional framework: The 17th Amendment provided for popular election of senators and the 22nd imposed a two-term limit on the presidency. And only four amendments were enacted to overrule decisions of the Supreme Court: The 11th Amendment barred suits in federal court by citizens of one state against another state, the 14th recognized the United States citizenship of African Americans, the 16th permitted Congress to impose an income tax, and the 26th lowered the voting age to 18--all in contrast to what the Supreme Court had said the Constitution permitted or required. The remaining handful of amendments were national housekeeping measures, the most important of which was the 25th Amendment's establishment of procedures for presidential succession.

Against this backdrop, the current enthusiasm for amending the constitution is concerning in that “there are strong structural reasons for amending the Constitution only reluctantly and as a last resort.”

- Stability. It has stood the test of time. “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Stability is one of the key virtues of having a Constitution in the first place. Amending it too often undercuts that purpose and undermines public confidence in the basic structure of our government.
- The Rule of Law. The Constitution is our fundamental charter of government. It should not be cluttered up with the sorts of directives found in legislation. The point of having a constitution is to establish a separation between the legal and the political realms. The constitution lays down those fundamental political ideals (equality, representation, individual liberties) that place limits on how far any short-term, political majority may go. The Constitution is our higher law. The rest is politics. Too-frequent amendments erode the boundary between our higher law and politics, making support for the Constitution a matter of political preference.
- Coherence. The Constitution was written as a unified document; amendments are piecemeal and can affect other parts of the whole. For instance, a balanced budget amendment could affect taxing, borrowing, and spending currently accomplished by a simple majority vote by imposing supermajorities on these actions, thereby transferring so much power to the minority that they may extort concessions in other areas, with the potential for significant spill-over effects. This is only one example, but it is clear that amendments can create conflicts within the document as a whole and thus have repercussions beyond their specific subject matter.
- Generality. The Constitution is purposefully drafted in general terms. Specifics are to come through judicial interpretation. However, generally worded amendments can be problematic. Either by what it specifies or does not specify, an amendment can have the potential to effect a major change to our fundamental governing document such as a redistribution of powers among the three branches of government. Striking the appropriate balance is incredibly difficult to get right.
- The Role of the Court. We have granted the Supreme Court broad interpretive powers. Constitutional amendments, especially those that overturn Court decisions, undermine respect for the legitimacy of the Court. It also erodes the social benefits of peaceful conflict resolution. Remember that we have amended the Constitution only four times in order to overrule the Supreme Court.

Continued on p. 6

The Court itself can squander public respect by so abruptly changing interpretations of the Constitution that they appear more politics than law. But that fact does not strengthen the case for more readily amending the Constitution. Rather, it illustrates the very pitfalls of constitutional mutability that amendment fever would exacerbate.

In summary, this does not mean that the Constitution should never be amended. But for all the reasons outline above, there should be a strong presumption against doing so except when changes consistent with the Constitution’s broad purposes are unlikely to be enacted by ordinary legislative means.



*Here is an answer to a question from our Money in Politics meeting on Sept 3: **What is the "Election Cycle?"***

The answer came from former Peoria County Clerk, JoAnn Thomas: **It is the time period starting the first day a candidate can collect petition signatures continuing to the election day.** Federal elections have different petition circulation dates than Illinois' state and local candidate petition circulation dates.

For established political parties in Illinois, petitioning starts Oct 8, 2015 for president and for partisan convention delegates.

For Illinois' candidates such as States Attorney, Circuit Clerk, some County Board seats, precinct committeepersons, etc. petitions are already circulating.

How Do We Fund Public Education?

“Funding Public Education” is the topic of discussion for Drinks & Dialogue, a program hosted by the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria. The public is invited to participate in the dialogue, **at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 21, at the Hearth Restaurant, 4604 N. Prospect Road, Peoria Heights, IL. Social begins at**

5 p.m.

- 5 -

This dialogue about school finance will open with comments from an expert on this issue, with discussion 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. There's no cost to participate, and refreshments are available to buy.

Inquires may be directed to Cheryl Budzinski, 309-253-9594 or c_budzinski@hotmail.com.

LOGO REPORT, Peoria County Board: Sept.10 was my first time attending the Peoria County Board meetings as the League Observer. All 18 Board members were present. Andrew Rand of District 14 is the elected chair of the Board.

Most of the meeting time was devoted to Proclamations and Presentations. Bill Atkins was recognized by a proclamation for his 11 years of service to the Board and County as their lawyer. He is retiring and going into private practice. No citizens asked to make any remarks. Thirteen or so items were adopted from the consent agenda. None were debated but all passed, with only a few nay votes. -- Elliott Murray, Observer

LOGO REPORT: Peoria Housing Authority: The PHA Board of Commissioners meets at 4:30 pm on the 4th Monday. The Board conducts its business in a timely and thoughtful manner. They praise the staff for "good upward progress" as they receive Section 8 reports. The Asset Management team was given a "good job" commendation.

At the August meeting they gave approval for the FY 2015-2019 five year Annual Agency Plan that is required by HUD. It was noted that they have not yet received approval for the plan that they were required to submit last year at this time. Approval is expected to come this month!

Importantly they gave the staff authorization to revise the next steps for the redevelopment of Taft Homes. They have received a RAD award from HUD to 80 units by 2016 which equals \$3 million. There is a good Redevelopment Concept Options report that was prepared for the board and available to anyone who is interested.

-- Mary Jane Crowell, Observer

Welcome New Members!

We're happy to welcome the following new members from August and September:

★ Ginny Nailing

★ Linda Millen

★ Gary Millen

★ Valda Shipp

★ Carolyn Shepherd

★ Joe Roberts



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

623 W. Stratford, Peoria, IL 61614

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ON THE WEB:

www.lwvqp.org

IMPORTANT DATES

October 1. 6 pm, Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force.

Advanced Medical Transport (AMT), 1718 N. Sterling, Peoria 61604.

Oct. 19. Noon. LWV Board, McClure Branch Library, 315 W. McClure, Peoria. *note this meeting changed to the 3rd Monday due to holiday on Oct 12.

Oct 21. 5:30 pm. Drinks & Dialogue, School Finance. Hearth Restaurant, 4604 N. Prospect Rd. Peoria Hts.

Oct 22. 7pm. Bradley University's Institute for Principled Leadership - Colleen Mathis, speaker, who chairs and successfully defended Arizona's Independent Redistricting Commission at the U.S. Supreme Court, Westlake Hall, auditorium room 130 (Colleen is from Peoria, IL)

Oct 26. Noon. LOGO Committee at Lakeview Library, 1137 W Lake, Peoria 61614

Nov. 5. 6 pm. Constitution Consensus Meeting, AMT, 1718 N. Sterling, Peoria. 61604