



THE VOTER

Volume 70, Issue 12

Nov. 2017

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IMPORTANT DATES

Thursday, Nov. 2, 6 pm
General Meeting,
Pension Reform,
Advanced Medical
Transport auditorium,
1718 S. Sterling, Peoria..

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's All About You- Really!!!!

I had the pleasure of meeting a dear League friend, Pat Landes, for lunch recently. We talked about the LWVGP current activities and how our work is as important as ever. The conversation reminded Pat of an excellent 2015 article by Elizabeth McNamara titled "***6 Ways the League of Women Voters Has Impacted Your Life.***" She sent me the article and I have listed below those six things that "Make Democracy Work."

1. **Increased access to the ballot**
2. **Easy ways to register to vote**
3. **Unbiased voter education information**
4. **A cleaner election system**
5. **Cleaner air and water**
6. **Improved access to health care and protection of reproductive rights**

Since 1920 when the League was founded, it has been about Americans like you- about fulfilling our mission of Making Democracy Work in the areas of voting rights, civic engagement, money in politics, environmental defense, health care and more.... These accomplishments were secured because League members fight to protect our democracy.

As described in this Voter, our League offers a variety of opportunities to Make Democracy Work in ways that continue to impact your life- I invite you to get involved because **it's all about you- really!!!!**

Looking forward to working with you in "**Making Democracy Work.**"

--Farrell Davies, President, LWV of Greater Peoria

PENSION REFORM TOPIC OF GENERAL MEETING, 6- 7 pm Thursday, Nov. 2.

Since the constitutional convention in 1970, Illinois has had one of the strongest protections against altering retiree pensions. This tight bond between the constitution and its pension agreements creates significant challenges for our state to address its unfunded pension liabilities.

Will Illinois ever be able to solve its pension problem? Will the solution address questions such as: Is it constitutional? Is it fair? Does it address the underlying issues?

Join the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria to hear former Illinois Representative David R. Leitch share his insights into this complex and critical state challenge. With 30 years of service in state government, Representative Leitch brings a wealth of knowledge and experience on this timely topic.

The meeting will take place from **6 – 7 pm on Thursday, Nov. 2 at the Advanced Medical Transport auditorium**, 1718 N. Sterling, Peoria.

DRINKS & DIALOGUE, Wednesday, November 15, 5:30 – 6:30 pm 'Gerrymandering:' a strange word that is a 'big deal.'

Why does my friend, who lives just down the street from me, have a different representative in Congress than I do? The answer may lie in gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering means that political boundaries are set in a way that favors one political party over another, to give one party an advantage in elections. Gerrymandering can help protect incumbents from challengers to their office.

Our representatives in Congress decide things like who gets help paying their health insurance premiums and what tax reform will look like. This makes gerrymandering a **big deal**. How political boundaries are set can impact all of our lives in very big ways.

Come learn more about gerrymandering at the League of Women Voters next "Drinks and Dialogue", which will be held on **Wednesday, November 15, 2017, from 5:30 to 6:30 PM** at the Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 West Glen Avenue, Peoria, Illinois.

Brad McMillan, Executive Director of Bradley's University's Institute for Principled Leadership in Public Service, will provide information and help guide the discussion of this important topic.

Prior to joining Bradley's Institute for Principled Leadership at its beginning in 2007, Mr. McMillan served for almost ten years as District chief of staff for then-Congressman Ray LaHood. Mr. McMillan also served as a member of the Illinois Reform Commission, which investigated ways to clean up Illinois government. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Illinois Wesleyan University and a law degree from Southern Illinois University School of Law. Prior to working for Mr. LaHood and joining Bradley, he was an attorney in private practice in the Peoria area for approximately six years. He has also served our community in other capacities, including chairing the "Friends of Build the Block" (Peoria Riverfront Museum), and serving on the boards of Heartland Community Health Clinic and Friends of Wildlife Prairie Park.

Wednesday, November 15, 2017, from 5:30 to 6:30 PM
Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 West Glen Avenue, Peoria, Illinois

The event is free and open to the public. Plan now to attend and bring a friend.

OBSERVER REPORT: Peoria Election Commission October 12, 2017: All members of the Election Commission were present at this meeting. In going over the month's bills, they discussed the excessive water bill. The September bill was for 30,000 gallons of water! It seems they have been paying for the utilities for the whole building, even though they are leasing only a percentage. Director Tom Bride will be talking with County officials who are working with the owner. The Election Commission should get a credit back from the owner.

The budget which will be presented to the County Board has six full time employees and one vacancy. Tom asked for another full time person, but was granted .6 (24 hrs/wk). The County will give a raise of 1.04% to all unrepresented staff. Mr. Bartolo felt that this was too low for the hard-working staff and recommended a 2% raise. This was passed as a budget amendment.

Tom Bride believes more money could be given the staff within the budget. The Commission's attorney says they are researching how much discretion there is. Elected officials have more discretion. The attorneys are looking into how much the commissions have.

In the Director's report, Tom said that extra money from this year's budget will be used to buy supplies for upcoming elections. He has met with Dewberry at the Brandywine location and then at the current location to figure out measurements: how much space is needed for various parts. He is hoping for a vote on bids in April, 2018, with a target date for letting bids of 2/12/18. He hopes to move in by August 1, with September 1, being the drop dead date.

It was suggested that bids should be approved in March instead of April to ensure enough time before the first day of voting on September 25. So far the plans include a large lobby that will be a multipurpose room. It can be used for training but also be opened up for voting.

The attorney for the Commission had spoken to the person who did the mold testing in the Brandywine building. It seems a pipe broke in the building last spring which led to the mold. Since the leak has been fixed, mold should no longer be an issue. On another item, the Elsamny case is still pending in the 3rd District Appellate Court. There will be no need for oral arguments.

Irene Pritzker, Observer, LWV of Greater Peoria

LWV EVENT IN BLOOMINGTON/ NORMAL on Nov. 8

The League of Women Voters of McLean County will feature Edwin Yohnka, Illinois ACLU Director of Communications and Public Policy, speaking on "Civil Liberties in the Trump Era" **at 7 pm on Wednesday, November 8**, at the Normal Public Library's Community Room, 206 W College Ave, Normal, IL. A group of Peoria members will carpool to this event. Contact Cheryl Budzinski for ride information at [\(309\)253-9594](tel:3092539594) or [<c_budzinski@hotmail.com>](mailto:c_budzinski@hotmail.com).

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES MEETING on Nov. 9

The Environmental Issues Group will meet Thursday, November 9th at 9:30 a.m. at Panera's off of Sterling, Peoria. Stop by for updates on local League environmental concerns, including next steps regarding action locally on coal tar sealants, which are used to cover asphalt but have highly toxic pollutants that are especially dangerous for children and infants. For more information contact Joyce Blumenshine, 309-678-1011.

Want to stay alert to specific issues that you are interested in? Try these:

LWV Illinois Issues Specialist reports: <http://www.lwvil.org/issues-specialists-monthly-reports.html>

League of Women Voters of Illinois positions: <http://www.lwvil.org/where-we-stand-2015-2017.html>

Legislative Guide for Illinois: <http://www.lwvil.org/legislative-guide.html>

Become an advocate for Illinois' issues at: <http://www.lwvil.org/grassroots-advocates.html>

National level, be an advocate: <http://lwv.org/get-involved>

League of Women Voters (national) positions <http://lwv.org/content/summary-public-policy-positions>

LEARN MORE ABOUT CITY-OWNED WATER FROM THOSE WHO KNOW

As part of a series of educational meetings hosted by the League, on October 28, Attorney Burt Dancey explained why the City of Pekin wanted but was not able to acquire ownership of its water system in 2002.

Under Illinois American Water Company (IAWC), the city of Pekin is in a zone separate from other local communities where IAWC operates water service. While the city of Pekin is excluded for unified rate increases, this has not guaranteed residents of Pekin lower rates. Water to the City of Pekin comes from several wells about 100 feet deep. The quality of the water is such that it requires minimal treatment and thus less expensive for IAWC to meet state and federal EPA guidelines compared communities using lake or river water. Note: in a recent study done by LWVGP, the average monthly water bill for Pekin resident is \$42.39.

In 1998, a task force of local citizens was asked by the Mayor to study the feasibility for the City of Pekin to purchase the water system with consideration of a purchase price of \$ 20 million or less and anticipated profit of \$1.5 million.

The advantages of City ownership were identified: rate control local, growth of city, cash flow from profit, jobs, and integrated maintenance. Some areas of concern by the task force were the level of cooperation with private ownership, value for citizens, response time for repairs, lack of coordination with scheduled resurfacing of roads and water main repairs, as well as no agreement on local impact of water use beyond city limits.

The results of the Task Force were issued in 1999 with opinion of all members that it was in the city's interest to pursue public ownership of the water company. Shortly after the report was issued, IAWC initiated an advisory referendum to obtain voter input. The 2000 referendum asked voters the following question: "Shall the City of Pekin, Illinois, purchase the facilities and business of Illinois-American Water Company which serve the Pekin area?"

Despite a vigorous campaign waged by the task force in support of acquisition, the referendum had 54 % of voters reject acquisition.

In 2002, the City of Pekin placed acquisition before the voters in an advisory referendum. In part this was due to announcement of the sale of IAWC parent company, American Water Works, to RWE, a German company. The referendum put before the voters was worded as follows: "Given the proposed sale of our local water company to a large, foreign corporation, should the city council take the necessary steps, including eminent domain, to obtain the water company, in order to preserve American ownership and obtain local control?"

The result of the referendum was 61 % vote in favor. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) determined that the results of the referendum did not represent the opinions of the Pekin District customers outside the City limits and were misleading and confusing to voters by use of language "sale" and "local water company". The RWE transaction was not a "sale" of IWAC but a transfer of stock of American. The ICC also challenged some of the concerns the City presented in their testimony regarding dissatisfaction with IAWC as well as old EPA violations on the city owned waste water operations. The City of Pekin appealed the ICC decision but was unsuccessful.

Key factors for other communities considering water buy out were identified as: buy-in of elected officials and citizens, as well as options for managing a publicly owned water system. Some options for management of public utility are creation of municipal corporation or private contractor.

-- Constance Romanus



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ON THE WEB:

www.lwvqp.org

IMPORTANT DATES

Thursday, Nov. 2 , 6 pm, General Meeting, Illinois Pension Reform, AMT Auditorium 1718 N. Sterling, Peoria.

Wednesday, Nov. 8, 7 pm, Civil Liberties in the Trump Era, Normal Public Library's Community Room, 206 W College Ave, Normal, IL.

Thursday, Nov. 9, 9:30 am. Environmental Issues Committee, Panera at Westlake Shopping Center, off Sterling, Peoria.

Wednesday, Nov. 15, 5:30 pm. Drinks & Dialogue, 'Gerrymandering,' Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 W. Glen, Peoria.