



THE VOTER

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IMPORTANT DATES

**Wed., Feb, 21, Drinks
& Dialogue, Food
Deserts, 5:30 pm.
Lariat Steakhouse,
2232 W. Glen, Peoria.**

**Thus. March 1, Single
Payer Healthcare,
Peoria Library, North
Branch.**

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

How Does the LWVUS 2018-2020 Proposed Program Plan Play in Peoria?

Dear League Members,

How the LWVUS moves forward over the next two years matters to the League in Peoria and every League in every community across the nation! By preparing for the upcoming League of Women Voters National Convention from June 28-July 1, 2018 in Chicago, Leagues across the nation are making their voices heard regarding The Campaign for Making Democracy Work proposed program for the 2018-2020 biennium. Our League members met on January 13th and came to consensus to continue national and local focus on the LWVUS program areas as follows:

- **Voting rights-** We are fortunate to have ease of registration in Illinois. Nationally, however, we need to support voter rights in all states. Locally, we need to encourage the elderly to re-register to vote if their signature has changed, and to educate felons that they can vote upon release from incarceration.
- **Improving elections-** Nationally, there needs to be emphasis on how to modernize elections while maintaining the integrity of voter data with paper backups as a strong consideration. Locally, we need to monitor installation of new voting equipment and work to register nursing home residents.
- **Redistricting-** This issue continues to be critically important. Consideration needs to be given to the California primary model of the top two vote getters running in the general election.
- **Campaign finance/money in politics-** Nationally, stay focused on libel laws. Locally, host candidate forums and continue to develop the PIA Votes Website.

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President's Message, continued. We were asked by two other Leagues to consider and weigh in on the following two topics for convention:

- **Electoral College**- While the LWVUS has a position to abolish the electoral college, the League has not undertaken action in this area. We agreed to support the LWVUS implementing action steps on this topic.
- **Artificial Intelligence**- The California League requested that the LWVUS study this topic. We determined that the topic remains too broad for a study currently. As a result, we recommend that the California League study the issue and bring their results to the 2020 national convention.

For more information on the League positions and issues we addressed, go to www.lwv.org. To stay updated on these topics and more, check us out on Face Book and on our website at www.lwvgp.org for information about our local activities and events!!!!

-- Farrell Davies, President, LWV of Greater Peoria

A Tribute to Nancy Clemmer's Legacy of Service and Leadership to The League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria

Nancy Clemmer's friends and family have shared many fond and special memories of her 50 years of dedicated service and leadership to the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria (LWVGP). These memories reflect decades of her commitment to making democracy work.

The LWVGP has been privileged to be the beneficiary of Nancy's memorial contributions. Taking Nancy's background in journalism and experience as a librarian into consideration, the LWVGP Board approved the use of these special memorial gifts to produce a historical record of the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria. Founded in 1924, our local League has a rich history reflecting the hard work and commitment of members like Nancy Clemmer. We are grateful that these tributes to Nancy will enable us to document and share the legacy that she helped create.

-- Farrell Davies

Voter Service Report

One of our goals is to educate citizens and connect them with their government. We are not doing so well as we approach this next primary election.

We do have a forum scheduled for Tazewell County races on **Sat. Feb 17 at 10 am** at Washington High School. The race for the 17 Congressional District is not contested any longer.

The forum for the 18th Congressional race is scheduled for **Saturday Feb 24** at the Peoria North library at 10:30 am.

We are helping register seniors at our 3 local high schools during the lunch hour on **Feb. 5, 6, and 7 from 10:30 to 1pm**. If you would be able to help any of those days, let me know.

We are going to register new citizens at the Naturalization Ceremony at **11 am Fri Mar. 2** at the downtown Peoria library. I have 4 of 8 registrars that I need, so if you are reading this, are a registrar and available please call me. It is always a joy to register the new citizens.

Voter Service will again meet on **Thur. Feb 8 at 3:30 pm**. We would welcome new members.

-- Mary Jane Crowell, Voter Service 309-674-5313

Here's the address for the Peoria County Election Commission. It was upgraded in December with the rest of the County website. People can check their registration, update their voter registration, request a mail-in ballot, find out where they vote, and find lots of useful information.
<http://www.peoriaelections.org>

HEALTHCARE -- *What Can We Do Now?*
A Forum on the Single-Payer Proposal for Universal Health Care

Thursday, March 1, 2018
6:00 PM - 7:45 PM
Peoria Public Library North Branch
3001 W. Grand Parkway Peoria, IL 61602

Program Agenda:

Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP): Slide presentation on single-payer health care.
Sue Saltmarsh from Demand Universal Healthcare, Martha Willi, MD, and Sheldon Schafer: Panel Discussion with Q&A.

Further information: Sheldon Schafer, 309.682.1876, sschafer7@comcast.net

Come at 4:30 for screening of the movie "Fix It: Healthcare at the Tipping Point".
Explore the business case for single payer (for both large and small businesses).

Co-sponsors:

Peoria Area Greens

Change Peoria

Illinois Single-Payer Coalition

Physicians for a National Health Program, Illinois

League of Women Voters (this is the League's March program event).

NAACP Peoria chapter

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES REPORT

Environmental Issues group meets **Wednesday, Feb. 14th at 10 a.m.** at the Panera Restaurant off of Sterling Ave. Get a Valentine treat and join in our small discussion meeting on environmental concerns for our area. We are currently assessing area use of coal tar sealants. For more information contact Joyce Blumenshine, 309-678-1011

Do You Have Coal Tar Sealants in Your Neighborhood?

Our LWV Environmental Issues group is researching locations where coal tar sealants are being used. These are typically applied on parking lots, driveways, and sometimes even on children's playgrounds as as coatings for asphalt surfaces and have a shiny appearance.

Coal tar sealants are hazardous. They contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) which can be endocrine disruptors causing birth defects or neurological problems for infants and small children. These substances are also carcinogenic. Rain and other runoff can carry the PAHs into area streams and waterways causing reproductive and other problems for fish and other wildlife.

Alternatives to coal tar sealants include asphalt based sealcoat, which has 1/1000th of the PAH content of coal tar sealants. There are also acrylic and latex based sealants. A University of Michigan study found it more cost effective to skip the use of sealants and to occasionally repave parking lots and other surfaces, rather than sealcoat regularly. Some states and cities have banned their use because they are so toxic.

The City of Peoria Public Works Department does not use coal tar sealants and big box stores like Home Depot and Lowes in Peoria do not sell them. If you think you see a coal tar sealant application in progress, please let our Environmental Issues group know. Leave a message for Joyce Blumenshine at 309-678-1011.

CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAM

A Clean Energy Town Hall Meeting titled "Employ Our People" will be held **Thursday, Feb. 22nd, 6:15 p.m.** at the Carver Center, 710 W. Percy Baker Jr. Ave., Peoria. This is sponsored by the Central Illinois Healthy Community Alliance and our LWV is a coalition member with them regarding area concerns for cleaner air and water and a just transition for our energy future. This program is a panel discussion covering training opportunities and jobs in solar energy. Representatives from Illinois Central College will talk about the \$1 million grant award for solar energy jobs training in coordination with Tri-County Urban League and other organizations.

THE AUDITOR REFERENDUM

On Jan 29, 2018 the LWVGP Board of Directors voted in agreement with the recommendation of the LWVGP Committee regarding supporting a "yes" vote on the Auditor Referendum on the March 20, 2018 ballot.

The committee included: Cheryl Budzinski, Gary Stella, and Terry Matthews.

Research included:

- background information from Peoria County Board Nov 28 meeting
- wording of the ballot referendum
- 2018 Peoria County budget
- LWVIL "Consolidation of Governmental Units & Sharing of Major Gov. Services"
- LWVGP position
- PASS FORWARD report dated June 28, 2012
- other LWVGP committee reports
- Information from current, former, and candidates for County Auditor; County Board Chair Rand and Vice Chair Morris; and League members, and the public.

Also, "In determining whether to support a consolidation/shared services proposal as a way of making government more efficient and effective, local Leagues should apply the criteria below. While it is not necessary that each standard be met, the League recognizes that these standards represent potential benefits of consolidation, leading to more efficient and effective government:

- *Will the proposal either result in projected cost savings and a positive effect on taxes over the long term?* Not necessarily. Unknown.
- *Will the proposal either result in an increased quality and/or efficiency of services or, at a minimum, maintain services at existing levels?* Likely to improve existing levels.
- *Will the proposal fairly address disparities in employee contracts?* (Highly paid position with no skills required.) Not applicable
- *Will the proposal result in a reduction in the number of governmental entities?* Yes.

Further, LWVIL's Where We Stand positions regarding "County Government Structure," the following position: "County legislative bodies should have the right to require independently elected county officials to adhere to the same personnel and procurement systems as appointed county department heads."

The third meeting addressed these considerations:

- PASS Forward (a group of citizens who looked extensively at both the Auditor and Recorder of Deeds positions in 2012) recommended:

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- 1. -referenda asking the voters about whether these positions be elected or appointed
- 2.-recommended those positions NOT be elected positions;
- 3.-"eliminating the Peoria County Auditor's elected position and having those duties preformed by an internal staff auditor in the Finance Department who reports directly to the Peoria County Board Audit Committee."
- **Theoretical arguments for electing the County Auditor:**
 - No check-and-balance of Peoria County Board.
 - Citizens better protected by a daily watch dog overseeing expenditures.
 - An independently elected auditor has no conflict of interest.
- **Theoretical arguments against electing County Auditor:**
 - Redundant. There is a Chief Financial Officer and a purchasing department.
 - Peoria County Board and County Auditor have similar statutory duties for devising system of accounts and financial records.
 - It's possible to hire someone based on professional background, education, with CPA status preferred rather than electing people who may not have the needed skills or expertise.
 - Historically in Peoria County, many elected officials have not worked full time.
 - Professional CPA with experience could be hired for current salary or less.
 - It's possible to hire staff with professional background rather than patronage hires.
 - Peoria County undergoes an extensive external audit annually.
 - The Peoria County Board is answerable to the Peoria County voters for mismanagement of Peoria County funds.
 - The County Auditor does not make policy.

In conclusion, the Committee reminds the LWVGP Board and membership that our local positions for over 20 years had included until recently that the County Auditor is not a policy-making position and should not be elected.

Further, because of advances in technology and changes in county government structure, **we support a "YES" vote on the referendum:**

"Shall the elected Office of the Peoria County Auditor be eliminated, effective December 1, 2018, and replaced with a professional County Auditor qualified and appointed by the County Board with a 5-year term during which such appointed County Auditor can only be removed from office for malfeasance or official misconduct? YES NO"

The preference of the committee is to eliminate the County Auditor position; passing this referendum is a path to that possible outcome.

Updates from the LWVGP Water Committee

CEO Council formally offered to pay \$400,000 for due diligence (see Tom Fliege's letter-to-the-editor in PJStar Jan 17 or the Jan 14 article in the PJStar by Chris Kaergard.)

The Feb 13 or 27 Peoria City Council meeting will include discussion of the CEO Council letter (offering the \$400,000 for due diligence).

Take "grass roots action." Expect a call or email from our League's Water Committee, and make a difference.

January 18 continued our series of public education meetings. The topic was about how a city-owned water system can be operated by a private company. A key question raised during public meetings was how the city would run a water distribution system. It could be owned by the city and setup as a municipal corporation like the Greater Peoria Sanitary District is setup with a Board of Trustees. Another model is for the city to own the system and hire a company to run it. To get a better understanding of the contract operator option, representatives from Veolia were invited to share some of the basics.

Veolia's experience traces back to the first such public/partnership in 1853. Veolia has experience at more than 8,500 water and wastewater systems worldwide. Suresh Jambunathan, Director of Business Development for Commercial & Municipal Business for Veolia North American and Margaret Becker Area Manager and Vice President of Operations with Veolia's Municipal and Commercial group in Central region presented information and answered questions. Veolia serves more than 550 communities in North America, treating more than 2.2 billion gallons of water and wastewater daily.

Jambunathan and Becker explained the ways such a public/private partnership is commonly set up, and answered questions submitted by the audience. Ms. Becker in her capacity as VP-Operations is also Project Director for Veolia's ongoing operations with the City of Streator, the City of Edwardsville, and the City of Wood River in Illinois. She serves as key point of contact with City Managers at those locations to address needs and concerns. Operating water systems is a core business for Veolia.

Water companies are natural monopolies. Water systems can be described by capacity and raw water source (determining treatment system for organic, inorganic, and bacteria.) The treated water distribution system includes pumps, pipes, meters, storage tanks, etc. Municipal ownership has advantages in financing and taxes among other advantages. My notes from the meeting:

- Public/private partnerships (PPP) that are structured to align incentives for superior performance, and penalties for under-performance can offer superior service (reliable, clean water meeting specified standards) and at equal or lower cost as compared to municipally owned-and-run operations. Furthermore, a well-structured PPP is simple to understand, painstakingly defines risks and allocates risks in a fair and transparent manner to the entity (Public owner or Private Partner) best placed to bear the risk in question. These partnerships provide operations and maintenance value since there are efficiencies including resource optimization.
- Contract scope and RFP/ RFQ process is very important.
 - Rigorous scope definition is the foundation of success in a PPP by avoiding misunderstandings / misinterpretations. A well-defined scope of work builds trust and allows both parties to work for the common good over the long-term considering inevitable changes in economic, environmental, legal/regulatory and technical conditions.
 - Contracts are usually 10-20 years duration and list reasons for termination but can be as short as 5 years. A typical reason for termination includes consistent under-performance in contractually agreed metrics.

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- Contracts include bonding and insurance; financial responsibilities like billing and collection; a schedule of deliverables for testing, monitoring, and public records; compliance with state and federal standards; permit responsibilities including repairs and risks; scope of operations (may include union contract).

In response to questions:

- For long/short term capital improvement plans, a “baseline” condition assessment is required to determine the condition of pipes, equipment.
- To determine whether to fix or replace equipment or pipes, a condition assessment at the time must be done.
- Response to a question about municipalities needing to take the low bid contract: that is why the scope must be spelled out in detail and the process must include "qualifying" bidders. Qualifying criteria can include operator financial strength, history and references, lifecycle technical approach, and price. These criteria should result in lowest lifecycle cost, which is very different from lowest initial cost.
- They stressed that with the good paying jobs such as within a water operations system, in the change to public/private partnership doesn't include layoffs. The business philosophy of top quality operators like Veolia is to retain and build on the experience of staff and augment their skills. Satisfied and empowered employees is a core business practice and a fundamental differentiator from a price-only operator.
- How are private companies paid? Based on the contract - might be a flat fee or percentage for operating the system.
- In a previous meeting, an elected official spoke about difficulties finding qualified operators. Response was there are a lot of folks retiring in the business, but with 50+ water plant operations in North America, Veolia has the necessary personnel. They see the position openings as an opportunity to train new local hires. A good employee development plan positions experienced and soon-to-retire employees as mentors for younger, inexperienced staff.

In response to the people who feel the City Council "can't operate the water system"- I feel comfortable with **the contracted operator option or the municipal corporation with a Board of Trustees** such as the Greater Peoria Sanitary District. Either would include transparency to the public of capital improvement plans and specifics of how our public dollars are used to provide service to us. *We currently have access to NONE of that information.*

Remember, after more than a year of study, the LWVGP members voted unanimously in May 2017 to support the City of Peoria pursuing due diligence toward possible purchase of the water utility, which is currently operated by Illinois American Water Co.

Big thanks to Veolia's Suresh Jambunathan and Peg Becker.

-- Cheryl Budzinski

DRINKS AND DIALOGUE FEB 21

The recent announcement of closure of two grocery stores in Peoria area have left the East Bluff and South Peoria neighborhoods with few options for purchasing food at a reasonable cost. Other issues for residents of these areas are transportation, access to fresh produce and meats. How is the City and community groups mobilizing to seek alternatives? Come to February 21 Drinks and Dialogue to hear Denise Urycki, from Gifts in the Moment, speak to this issue. Gifts in the Moment is a local non-profit organization whose mission is to use gifts to effect change in the world whether feeding the hungry or decreasing food waste and teaching self-sufficiency, such as community gardens.

Join us at the Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 W. Glen Avenue, Peoria for social time 5:00 PM – 5:30 PM. Program will start at 5:30 PM with a presentation by Denise and discussion with audience. Bring a friend and join the discussion!

-- Constance Romano



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

623 W. Stratford, Peoria, IL 61614

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ON THE WEB:

www.lwvqp.org

IMPORTANT DATES

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 10 am. Environmental Issues Committee, Panera at Westlake Shopping Center, off Sterling, Peoria.

Wednesday, Feb., 21, 5:30 pm. Drinks & Dialogue, Food Deserts, Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 W. Glen, Peoria.

Thursday, Feb. 22, 6:15 pm. Clean Energy Town Hall Meeting titled "Employ Our People" Carver Center, 710 W. Percy Baker Jr. Ave., Peoria.

Thursday, March 1, 6 pm. Single Payer Healthcare, Peoria Public Library North Branch, 3001 W. Grand Parkway, (behind Menards off Allen Road), Peoria.

Friday, March 2, 11 am. Register New Voters, Peoria Public Library downtown, 107 NE Monroe, Peoria.

February 8, 2018. Early voting begins in the Election Commission Office, 542 SW Adams, Peoria, IL 61602

February 21, 2018. Grace period registration and voting begins.

March 20, 2018. General Primary Election.

June 28 – July 1. National LWV Convention in Chicago, IL