



Volume 73 Issue 4

April 2020

President's Message

Stay safe

I hope you and your family members are doing well in this unprecedented COVID-19 public health crisis. The “watch words” of the day are frequent hand-washing for 20 seconds and social isolation. Together, we can reduce our exposure and that of others. There are many opportunities to keep in touch via social media and reduce feelings of aloneness. Check these: Fine Arts Society – Facebook; Peoria Riverfront Museum virtual messages, as well as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube; OLLI website; and Peoria Area World Affairs Council website.

Understandably, the U.S. 2020 U.S. Census is the big story that has gotten less attention in the past few weeks. Hopefully, all of you have received an invitation to complete this census in your mail, with a census ID and directions to go online to a secure site at my2020census.gov. I did mine before the ID arrived. It was quick and easy and provided confirmation. If you do not have access to the Internet, you will receive a paper copy to complete and return by mail. If you need help, call the Census Bureau at 1-844-330-2020.

Census data determines the funding our community receives for services and infrastructure. That includes health care, senior centers, jobs, roads, schools and businesses. More than \$675 billion in federal funding flows back to states and local communities each year based on decennial census data. It is vital we're counted! Illinois could lose significant amount of funding without a fair and accurate census.

Most importantly the census determines the boundaries of federal, state and local voting districts! Illinois could lose one — maybe even two — of our 18 Congressional seats, given our recent population loss of 33,703. Encourage others to complete the 2020 census. The Census Bureau does not share individual responses with immigration enforcement agencies, law enforcement or to determine eligibility for government benefits. Learn more at www.census.gov/privacy.

—— Connie Romanus, LWVGP President

IMPORTANT DATES: April 13. LWVGP Board meeting & May 7 annual meeting: **STAY TUNED FOR DETAILS**

BEST-LAID PLANS: Annual Meeting Edition

As you know, COVID-19 has changed everything from the stock market to lunch plans. LWVGP is adapting as best we can. Please be flexible with us!

For example, the Agenda and details of the annual meeting will be sent to members separately from the April newsletter. The following information will be included: date, time and how to log into the meeting online, as well as, Nominations to Board, Proposed Budget, and Program Planning.

————— Connie Romanus

BEST-LAID PLANS: Annual Dinner Edition

Thank you to all who purchased dinner tickets for our event scheduled for March 25. Refund checks are being sent to anyone who did not donate that amount to the LWVIL Education Fund, a 501(c)3 entity for our League. Acknowledgment letters are being sent to those who made a donation to the Education Fund.

We will continue with the raffle drawing and are extending purchase of raffle tickets to April 8, with drawing on April 9. Contact Jan Deissler at jandeissler77@gmail.com or 309.635.1872.

Tickets are \$10/each or \$25/3. Prizes: \$ 75 gift card to Basta in Eastport with bottle of wine, adult beverage baskets, wide screen television, gift basket from Global Village and more.

Proceeds from the Raffle are 100 percent profit because the prizes are donated. This means the League will be better able to carry on its important work in our community in the coming year.

————— Connie Romanus and Jan Deissler

PEORIA CITY COUNTY LANDFILL COMMITTEE, Mar. 18

Cancelled.

————— Joyce Blumenshine

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

It looks like another month of social distancing! In many ways that may be good as we re-connect with friends and family that we haven't contacted in months. In other ways, some of us are going just a bit 'stir-crazy' wondering when/if this distancing will ever end. Although we're sure it will, waiting for that to happen is difficult! Stay healthy! Stay tuned! Stay connected! You might note that this month's report looks like the one from March – if you read that one??? Well, it is, as we wonder what new we can write.

Membership chairs did have a Google conference with Lali Watt from LWVIL regarding membership and League concerns and issues. It was primarily an interview with us so that if elected to the LWVUS Board she would be better able to represent us there. She was able to pass along some suggestions for our League in regard to membership. The primary takeaway is: Your friends have not joined the League because you have not asked them. So for the upcoming year could you commit to inviting one friend or family member to join? You are hearing in regard to COVID-19 that we're all in this together. Think about how that might work in other areas of your life, including the League.

As we prepare for a busy election year, it is imperative we have a strong and viable League membership. Providing nonpartisan information to voters is a must. We need not only the present members to renew their membership, we need to recruit new people. Ask your co-workers, your neighbors, your friends and family if they won't join with us to "Make Democracy Work". The 2020-21 membership form will be in The Voter in May. We are still accepting memberships for this year.

For more information, see lwvgp.org.

As you know, the Annual Dinner had to be canceled. As you have read in the President's column or elsewhere in The Voter, we will have the drawing. Many raffle prizes including gift baskets, restaurant gift cards, a gift basket from The Global Village and a flat screen television. Tickets are available from Jan at the phone or address below. Sales extended to April 8. Your payment can follow in the form of check to LWVGP, P.O. Box 9786, Peoria IL 61612.

The Annual Membership Social will (tentatively) be held on July 15, at the home of Ron and Cheryl Budzinski. Save the Date. This is a wonderful time to pay dues (if you have not done so), network with others of diverse thinking, hear from our President regarding the coming year's plans and share wonderful appetizers.

Let's make 2020-2021 a year of growth for the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria. Questions contact either Jan or Linda.

Jan Deissler
Jandeissler77@gmail.com
309-635-1872

Linda Millen
tchkids2@sbcglobal.net
309-645-254

Nominating Committee Slate of Officers and Directors for 2020-2021:

Officers:

President:	Constance Romanus	May 2019-2021
1st V-P/Treasurer:	Terry Kohlbus	May 2019-2021
	President 2021-2023	
2 nd V-P:	Kathie Raiborn	May 2019-2021
Secretary:	Sandy Stemler	May 2020-2022

Continuing Directors:

Director:	Tim Howard	May 2019-2021
	Co-chair Redistricting Committee/Gary Stella	
Director:	Terry Bibb-Knight	May 2019-2021
	Voter Newsletter	
Director:	Kirsten Hall	May 2019-2021
Director:	Jamilla Wilson	May 2020-2022
Director:	Roberta Parks	May 2020-2022
	Voter Service Chair	

New Directors:

Director:	Sean Koors	May 2020-2022
Director*:	Cheryl Budzinski	May 2020-2021
	Past President	

*Fills remaining one year of Spanky Edwards' term

Nominating Committee 2020-2021: Chair Farrell Davies
Members Shelley Epstein and Ryan Hidden

Nominating Committee 2021-2022: Chair Shelley Epstein
Members Melanie Anderson and Peter Kobak

Farrell Davies

PEORIA COUNTY BOARD, March 12

Peoria County Board Chairman Andrew Rand opened the regular March meeting at 6 p.m. Board members James Dillon, Barry Robinson and Phil Salzer were absent.

Mr. Rand adjusted the meeting schedule to begin with an update from Monica Hendrickson, Director of Peoria City/County Health Department. Ms. Henderson gave an overview of the current status of COVID-19, including the opening of a joint response center, ongoing work of a strong policy group addressing a wide range of issues and ongoing public information.

She said the virus situation is fluid and evolving. While it will not be possible to stop all cases, the goal is to slow down the number of those infected and protect the public. She said this effort will be a marathon and reviewed recommended procedures. Chairman Rand urged everyone to follow hand-washing guidelines and other protective measures.

The meeting resumed with the regular agenda. Proclamations included recognizing Centre State International Trucks on their 40th business anniversary and recognizing April and May as "Gerald M. Brookhart Arts in Education Spring Celebration" months, with lunchtime events scheduled April 15 to May 15. At Citizen's Comments, Board member Brian Elsasser introduced Mark Douras, who showed a video and talked about the work he and his wife provide at Refreshing Mercies Ministries, Dunlap. The last public comment was by Jon Carson, Trajectory Energy, who gave an update on what the solar company is doing since several locations in Peoria County received zoning approval.

The Consent Agenda had nine items which were approved. Five items were on the Zoning Ordinance and Resolutions listings. The first was a variance request for a cell tower that would be 255 feet, which is above the County Unified Development Ordinance limit of 200 feet for a non-residential zoning district. This was approved. There were two other zoning cases.

Two resolutions were approved: 1) a cooperative research agreement between the County of Peoria and Bradley University for the Pavement Management Program; 2) a resolution from the board Executive Committee recommending County Administrator compensation. Information on this last item was contained in a separate agenda briefing blue page available on the public table containing print-outs of the meeting agenda and board packet. A 2.5 percent increase was approved based on the performance review that was completed, along with a one-year extension to the administrator's current employment agreement. The meeting went into executive session regarding personnel matters to resume for adjournment after that.

Chairman Rand urged everyone to be mindful of health and safety regarding COVID-19 and to keep informed.

————— Joyce Blumenshine

PEORIA HOUSING AUTHORITY, March 12

Rescheduled meeting held at Peoria Housing Authority offices, 1800 S. Richard Pryor Way, Peoria, IL. Tim Shelley, local NPR reporter was present. Board members present: Secretary, Helen King, who led the meeting, and Commissioner Kim Furness. PHA Director Jackie Newman and Springfield Housing Authority Deputy Director Melissa Huffstedtler were present, as well.

A representative from Bear Development, the company that will construct the new housing at the Taft Homes site, reported on the status of the project. Stakeholder meetings have been held with the City of Peoria and residents of Taft. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has approved the initial application and the next phase was due by March 23. The Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) allows for specific number of public housing units to change to federal based vouchers. Two hundred and twenty-six units at Taft will be demolished to make way for renovation; 142 new units will be built as single and duplex style homes.

The East Bluff Project is also part of this effort.

Jane Genzel, Executive Director of Peoria Opportunities Foundation was in the audience and gave an overview: project consists of 16 RAD properties and will build 20 single family homes and five duplexes; all are two or three bedrooms and are fully applianced. Bear Development expects the timeline for approval process and funding to take to the end of 2020. This funding will include Individual Development Accounts (IDA), which provides funds to persons of low income to promote asset building and promote home ownership.

Helen King stated the Taft project has full support from the PHA Board; Peoria City Council has also given support to the project. Director Newman stated that both of these approvals give strength to the project with HUD officials.

PHA will continue to meet with stakeholders to finalize plans and keep residents updated on the project. Current residents of Taft would be eligible to apply for units in the East Bluff Project under the “Resident Right to Return” or they could opt for new unit at Taft.

The meeting ended at 12:22 p.m.

Note: This Observer is wondering if the PHA Board has developed a plan to hire a permanent Director for the Peoria program. With the experience of Director Newman and the scope of the project development, it seems that finding the right person to follow Director Newman should be a priority and time is slipping away.

———— Connie Romanus

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION, March 10

The Peoria County Election Commission held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 10. The meeting started late due to a lack of quorum until Secretary Sandra Burke arrived at 2:06 p.m. Commissioners Mark Ketterer and LaColis Reed were absent.

That morning Director Tom Bride had received a phone call from Independence Village requesting that the polling place be moved from their location due to concerns about coronavirus and their elderly residents. Bride then contacted the other two senior residences, St. Sharbel and Lutheran Hillside Village. They, too, asked that the polling places be moved. Director Bride was able to move all three to nearby polling places, with placement on the other side of the room to cut down on confusion. A mailing was to be sent to all affected voters.

As of March 10, 2,514 vote-by-mail ballots had been sent out, with approximately 1,000 already returned. There had also been 2,550 early voters.

It was brought to the commission's attention that people who had registered to vote many years ago had not been asked for a driver's license or Social Security number. This has made it difficult for some to receive vote-by-mail ballots, since two forms of ID are now needed. Those people affected can update their information either in person or by phone.

———— Irene Pritzker

DRINKS & DIALOGUE

We are trying something new with Drinks & Dialogue this year!

In light of feedback from members, we will be adapting the structure of both General Meetings and D&D to provide a combined experience once a month, instead of holding two separate events each month.

With this new structure, the two committees will work together to identify topics of interest related to LWVGP priorities. The new structure will begin this summer after the 100th Anniversary Celebration events, in those months in which there is not another League function.

Additionally, board members Kathleen Kelly and Jamila Wilson will take the intervening months to begin networking with existing community groups, such as the Young Professionals Organization of Greater Peoria, Generation United, NAACP NEXTGEN Leaders, and any other professional or social groups in the area to raise awareness about the League and to recruit new and diverse members.

Initial first steps will be to identify potential groups and attend their social events to network as League representatives. Any suggestions are welcome, and members are encouraged to join in this effort to represent the League at various events around the community.

Kathleen and Jamila will work to maintain relationships with the groups, of-

fering to present programs on the League where appropriate and exploring co-hosting speaker events to expand attendance and reach. The purpose of these efforts is to increase diverse membership in the LWVGP.

Some initial topics for 2020 Drinks & Dialogue events include criminal justice study, graduated income tax, natural resources and the environment, and the Electoral College.

Please feel free to contact Kathleen Kelly at Kathleen.kelly613@gmail.com with questions, suggestions, or to learn how to join the committee.

———— Kathleen Kelly

LONG-TIME MEMBER SHIRLEY BELKE DIES

Shirley Belke, a life member of the League of Women Voters, died March 23, 2020 in Oak Park, Illinois, where she had lived near her extended family for the past several years. She was 92.

Her daughter Carolyn said Shirley had been fighting cancer. Leaguers in Peoria knew of her fighting spirit both on the Peoria County Board and for causes like the ERA, Council Manager form of city government and the at-large/district form of electing Peoria City Council members. She was a mentor to many of us and a faithful annual donor to the Greater Peoria Area League. She is already missed.

———— Fran Kepler

CUMULATIVE VOTING STUDY UPDATE

The committee studying cumulative voting in Peoria has been gathering historical and current information on the effect such voting has had in City Council elections.

We have interviewed Larry Aspin, who collects and studies the data; Joyce Banks, who was one of the litigants in the case that led to cumulative voting; and current council members John Kelly, Rita Ali and Beth Jensen.

We are in a holding pattern right now because of sheltering at home. Anyone interested in joining the study committee can contact one of the co-chairs Irene Pritzker, ipritzker@comcast.net or Gary Stella, gfstella37@gmail.com.

While LWVGP does not have a position on cumulative voting, we have the following long-held position: “The League supports the election of the members elected from districts and a portion of the council members elected at-large on a non-partisan basis with staggered terms.”

———— Irene Pritzker/Cheryl Budzinski

TOWNSHIP STUDY COMMITTEE

The original purpose of the LWVGP Township Committee was to examine Peoria Township Supervisor Frank Abdnour's proposal to separate Peoria Township from the City of Peoria.

The proposal requires a referendum and means City Councilpersons would no longer make up the Township Board. This includes electing a small township board, clerk and supervisor as other townships in Illinois do. Abdnour's proposal eliminates the township collector position and cites taxpayer savings, more efficient government, and more direct election of officials.

We would determine if our League should support, oppose or stay neutral on the issue. We determined and notified the LWVGP Board and Supervisor Abdnour that we could not support his proposal because it was expanding rather than consolidating the number of units of local government.

We appreciate his efforts and the efficiencies that Supervisor Abdnour has instituted in his office.

In researching Supervisor Abdnour's proposal, the fact that Peoria Township in Peoria County will soon be the only county of 102 counties in Illinois to have an active Township Collector. The only other current collector is in Capitol Township in Springfield which will be rolled into the county treasurer's responsibility starting in 2021. This involved enabling state legislation and a referendum.

Currently McHenry Township in McHenry County is on the ballot for possible dissolution.

Our committee feels it should continue to monitor possible township efficiencies.

—— Cheryl Budzinski, Gary Stella, Kathie Raiborn, Connie Romanus, Farrell Davies

VIRTUAL ADVICE

Courtesy of Cheryl Budzinski, here are some tips for staying in touch and social distancing at the same time.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS (Online & Phone) LWV Oregon

14 March 2020

Our Board asked for nuts & bolts technical advice to keep in touch virtually, so important with COVID-19 now. Including older people online is not the issue it used to be but can still be challenging. Please share recommendations and questions! Let's do our best with the tools at hand.

This technical advice is for League meetings. We have separate advice on:

- Video Broadcasts, including Live-Streaming: Tips before, during and after, tools you'll need

- Working Remotely, Document and file-sharing: a linked list

For more general advice, we recommend:

- [Coronavirus Prevention Guidance for Leagues](#) for lots more!
- [Preparing for Coronavirus Crisis: As Organizers, It's Time to do What We Do Best](#)

Thanks to Christina Davis, LWV. See our League Leaders and New Media Facebook Groups for updates.

- [Becky Gladstone](#), President, [LWVOR](#)

ONLINE MEETINGS

Thanks to Christina Davis, LWVUS Special Projects, for this assortment of tools. We've added links..

[GoToMeeting](#)

- Ranking 4.2/5 with 2913 reviews
- 14 day free trial
- \$12/month-150 participants
- \$16/month- 250 participants
- HD video, screensharing, web audio, dial in conference line, unlimited meetings, no meeting time limits, business messaging, personal meeting room, transcription, keyboard & mouse sharing, slide to PDF

[GoToWebinar](#)- This may be a branch of GoToMeeting, recommended in a Leaders' Facebook page.

[Slack](#)

- Ranking 4.5/5 with 8152 reviews
- Free- \$0/month for small teams trying Slack for an unlimited period of time
- Access to 10,000 of your team's most recent messages, 10 integrations with other apps like Google Drive, Office 365, and many more, 1:1 voice and video calls between teammates
- Standard- \$6.67/month: for small and medium sized businesses
- All the benefits of Free + the full context of your organization's management history, timely info and actions in one place with unlimited integrations, face to face communications with group voice and video calls of up to 15 teammates, secure collaboration with outside organizations or guests from within Slack
- Plus- \$12.5/month: for larger businesses or those with additional administration needs
- All benefits of Standard + advanced identity management through SAML-based SSO and real time Active Directory sync with OneLogin, Okta and Ping, compliance requirements met with corporate exports for all messages, around the clock teamwork and assistance with 99.99% guaranteed uptime and 24/7 support

[Zoom](#)

- Ranking 4.9/5 with 2370 reviews
- Basic- \$0/month
 - Host up to 100 participants, 1:1 meetings, 40 minute group meeting limit, unlimited number of meetings, online support, video conferencing features, web conferencing features, group collaboration

- Pro- \$14.99/month: small teams
 - Basic features + 24 hr meeting duration, user management, admin feature controls, reporting, custom personal meeting ID, assign scheduler
- Business- \$19.99/month: small & med business
 - Pro features + 300 participants, phone support, admin dashboard, managed domains, single sign on, company branding, custom emails, cloud recording transcripts

Skype

- Ranking 4.2/5 with 1163 reviews
- \$0/month
 - Instant messaging and chat history, calls between skype and landline/ mobile phone numbers, video calling and screen sharing

Ready Talk

This one was not included in the LWVUS list but we know some have used it.

Google Meet (previously Hangouts)

- Ranking 4.3/5 with 202 reviews
- Basic- \$6/month
 - Includes Gmail, calendar, 30GB drive, hangouts chat and meet, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms
- Business- \$12
 - Includes Gmail, calendar, unlimited drive storage, hangouts chat and meet, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms

Group Phone calls

Note that most online meeting programs have a call-in option for audio only. From LWV-Wake County in NC: We're starting to use www.freeconferencecall.com. Totally free and can do audio, video, and screen sharing conferencing. There are options to record your conference which I have not yet used.



**League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria**

413 W. Lawndale Ave., Peoria, IL 61604

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ON THE WEB: **www.lwvgp.org**

IMPORTANT DATES:

April 13. LWVGP Board meeting & **May 7** annual meeting: **STAY TUNED FOR DETAILS**

**League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria Board of Directors
2019-2020**

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309.264.9113
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Kathie Raiborn, 1st V-P
Terry Kohlbus, 2nd V-P & Treasurer
Sandy Stemler, Secretary

Cheryl Budzinski Farrell Davies Kirsten Hall Tim Howard Kathleen Kelly Terry Bibb Knight Roberta Parks Jamila Wilson

Newsletter

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