

President’s Message

Understanding LWVIL transition to 501(c)(3) status

In last month’s Voter, I gave an overview of LWVIL convention actions taken on Program topics outlined in the Three Pillars. This month I wanted to share some information on the LWVIL transition to a 501(c)(3) entity. The state league has been operating as a 501(c)(4) for primary operations and also having a 501(c)(3) status for local leagues’ education fund. This has required added expense and time to maintain two sets of financial records. The delegates at 2023-24 Biennium Convention voted to move to eliminate 501(c)(4) and pursue 501(c)(3) status. Many local leagues have moved to this over the years. LWVIL website has information on this to guide local leagues. LWV Greater Peoria became 501(c)(3) in 2020.

What are the differences between 501(c)(3) and (c)(4)

501(c) (3)	501 (c) (4)
A public charity , organized for charitable or educational purposes.	A social welfare organization , organized for social welfare purposes.
Cannot support or oppose candidates for elected office. *	Can support or oppose candidates for elected office and political parties. *
Donations and member dues are deductible as long as nothing is received in return and donations are not specifically restricted for lobbying activities.	Donations and member dues are not deductible for donors or members
Lobbying activities cannot be a substantial part of an organization’s activities.	Lobbying activities are not limited.

*This distinction is irrelevant as LWV internal rules prohibit this type of political activity.

An advantage regarding fundraising: Member dues do not always cover all expenses of League's mission work. Being 501(c)(3) allows fundraising opportunities, as well as grants and online donor tools. Vendor discounts are limited to 501(c)(3) entities. Donations and member dues will be tax deductible for those that itemize. Donations from donor advised funds are limited to 501(c)(3) organizations.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING AS 501(C)(3)

- No restrictions on a 501(c)(3)'s advocacy activities.
- Only lobbying is restricted, and even those restrictions are not expected to have an impact on the League's activities.
- What is the difference between advocacy and lobbying?
- Advocacy is **education about legislation**.
- Lobbying is any attempt to **influence specific legislation**, including legislation that has been introduced OR proposed.

What are the limits on lobbying?

- Lobbying cannot be a **substantial** part of 501(c)(3) organization's activities. The definition of **substantial** is based on annual expenditures. No more than 20% of total expenses can be spent on lobbying, and within that, only 5% can be on grassroots lobbying.
- Expenses include things like printed materials: postcards, handouts, yard signs, buttons, etc. Volunteer time is UNLIMITED.
- The lobbying restriction should not have a significant impact on the League, as most lobbying activities are performed by volunteers.

There are two kinds of lobbying, direct and grassroots.

Direct Lobbying:

- Any attempt to influence specific legislation by communicating with member or employee of legislative body or government official who may participate in formulation of the legislation.
- The communication must do **both** of these things:
 - Refer to specific legislation (including legislation already introduced OR proposed).
 - Reflect a view on that legislation (support or opposition).

- Note: Direct lobbying can include communication with voters about item on ballot (initiative, referendum, etc.) as voters are considered to be “legislators” in that case.

Grassroots Lobbying

- Attempt to influence legislation by affecting opinions of general public or any segment thereof (such as League members).
- Communications **must** do all of following:
 - Refer to specific legislation (including that already introduced OR proposed).
 - Reflect view on that legislation (support or opposition).
 - Encourage recipient of communication to take action about the legislation.

Considerations about incorporation

- Not required for 501(c)(3) status to local League.
- Requires file and annual fee to Illinois Secretary State’s Office.
- Provides limited liability protections for members. LWVIL also provides insurance for local League members.
- Sales tax exemptions are independent of 501(c)(3) status.

State of Illinois has stricter guidelines for 501(c)(3) entities regarding lobbying than federal guidelines. Our Board Secretary, Jim Runyon, has a great deal of experience with 501(c)(3) guidelines in Illinois and has made the Board aware that state guidelines have recently been revised.

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

Important Dates:

3-5 p.m. Sun., Aug. 6: Meet-the-artist event for Progressive Woman sculpture at Baum Family Center, 4313 N. Voss St. in Peoria Heights

4 p.m. Mon., Aug. 14: LWVGP Executive Board via Zoom.

5:30 p.m. (social), 6-7 p.m. (program), Wed. Aug. 16: Drinks and Dialogue at Lariat Steakhouse

UPCOMING EVENTS: DRINKS & DIALOGUE

For Drinks and Dialogue in August, ICC President Dr. Sheila Quirk-Bailey has agreed to be our speaker. She will be introduced by ICC Board of Trustees Chair and LWVGP member Gale Thetford. ICC is an enormously important resource in

our community and makes an impact in a variety of ways. It serves as a gateway for many young people who want to make a better life for themselves.

With that in mind, I'd like to make a special request of our members. If you can join us, please give some thought to bringing a guest who might be thinking about enrolling at ICC. This will be a unique opportunity to hear from ICC's top leadership what the College has to offer and why it is worth serious consideration for anyone seeking higher education or improved skills. We might even generate some more interest in terms of attracting additional LWVGP membership. That feels like a potential win for us, our guests and ICC.

Please try to join us on Aug. 16th at the Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 W. Glen Ave. in Peoria. Social time starts at 5:30 p.m. and the program kicks off at 6 p.m. We expect to wrap things up by 7 p.m.

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VOTER SERVICES

Mostly, the Voter Service Committee took a short vacation in July! The exception to that was the voter registration effort at the River City Pride Festival held on the Riverfront in mid-July. Thanks to Piper Petrocelli for organizing this. We registered 6 new voters and handed out information about the League and voting to many more.

———— Rob Parks and Eileen Steed, Voter Services Co-chairs



MEMBERSHIP

A big thanks to Jan Diessler, Membership Chair, and her team for a successful Member Social on July 19! The breeze was pleasant and the rain stayed away. Approximately 50 members and guests participated in conversation, pizza and beverages. Our League has three 50-year members: Hettie Beers, Fran Kepler and Irene Pritzker.

Becky Simon, newly elected President of LWVIL, attended and had opportunity to speak with many of those in attendance. During some of the discussion, a question was asked how local Leagues can work



toward fair and safe elections in the coming year. Becky clarified that one of the actions Local leagues can make is to consider taking training to be a poll watcher in the 2024 election season. Poll watchers observe activities in polling locations to ensure elections are conducted in a free and fair manner and can be in polling place prior to polls opening, during voting hours and after polls close. Poll watchers may challenge the validity of a voter to be eligible to vote in specific precinct by addressing issue with the election judges at the location. The elections judges will make final decision regarding voter eligibility. Poll watchers can also request a copy of the final vote count.

Piper Petrocelli was kind enough to take candid photos of the event. Our next event will be August 16 for Drinks and Dialogue.

If you have not had a chance to renew your dues, you can do this online at www.lwvgp.org or mail to LWVGP, P.O. Box 9786, Peoria IL, 61612-9786. Thank you to all those who have renewed.

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PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: July 13

The Peoria County Board held its July 13th regular meeting with all members present.

Regular business included a zoning request in Logan Township, the approval of Amy McLaren for a third six-year term as county engineer, and a project management contract with R. J. Unes, Inc., with all three passing unanimously. McLaren is

one of only four female county engineers in the state and has the greatest tenure among those four. She was highly praised by county infrastructure committee members for her professionalism and regular communication. R.J. Unes, Inc. was contracted to be the county's "eyes and ears" while managing the large number of capital improvement projects the county currently has underway.

Two proclamations were read recognizing the 50th anniversary of the W. D. Boyce Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and the 40th anniversary of the Peoria Chiefs minor league baseball team. Chairman Jimmy Dillon referenced a third proclamation previously read recognizing a number of Peoria County deputies, firefighters from Limestone and West Peoria, and three citizens who were honored for their lifesaving actions during a June 20 fire at the Edgewood Apartments.

There were two citizens' remarks focused on a possible use for the former Hanna City detention facility, and the other requesting the board to file as an intervenor in the recent CO₂ pipeline application. Chairman Dillon indicated the county intends to complete documentation as an intervenor just as the Peoria City Council has.

The Consent Agenda consisted of twenty-five items which County Administrator Scott Sorrel stated was the most in more than a decade. All passed unanimously and include:

- Appropriation of \$2M from the 2022 general fund surplus to the capital projects fund.
- Intergovernmental agreements between the Peoria Sheriff's Office and the Illini Bluffs school district and with the IL Dept. of Children and Family Services.
- Acceptance of grants for the Coroner's office and PCAPS.
- Capital expenditures for improvement projects with the Probation Dept., the Circuit Clerk's Office, the Highway Dept., and at the County Courthouse.
- Engineering contracts for planned improvements for Glasford Road, and Maxwell and Middle Roads.
- Adoption of a new county highway access ordinance that shifts the responsibility for culvert installation between a county highway and a privately held property from the county to the property owner.

Links to the meeting agenda and video are here: [Agenda](#) & [Video](#)

———— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: July 11

The Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners met on Tuesday, July 11, with all commissioners present including Commissioner Matt Bartolo participating by phone. Since the budget for 2024 must be approved at the August meeting before being sent to the County Board, the majority of the meeting was spent discussing money matters. Director Elizabeth Gannon wants to purchase an Opex model 72 Rapid Extraction Desk to automatically open and extract vote-by-mail ballots. The cost of the Extractor is \$44,570, but the estimated savings in personnel costs to manually extract the ballots will be \$41,519.33 for 2024. The purchase was approved.

The Board also approved entering into a contract with ElectionStats for the creation of a database that is user friendly to enable the public to access past elections results from the Commission website. The initial creation will cost \$6,175 per year for the license and \$3,000 to \$5,000 to catch up on past results.

Finally, the Board approved extending the contract with SOE Software for one year for online poll worker training. This will get past next year's Presidential election. The Board can then look at other training possibilities.

Director Gannon will be discussing next year's budget with a County Board member, County Administrator Scott Sorrel, and the County finance department on Aug. 1.

Under new business, the Commission wants to either purchase the building they are in or lease more space. Discussions about this will be held with the County Board in August and September.

———— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: June 27

The Council took following action:

- Approved liquor licenses for Saffron Social, 124 SW Adams St, and for LeBakery Café, 4700 N. University, Ste. 14 A and B.
- Approved citizen appointments to 16 boards and commissions for 2024-25 term.
- Approved contract with Color-Ad, Inc, for Downtown Wayfinding signs project in amount of \$620,830. Seventy-two signs with 11 designs will be in-

stalled in downtown area; signs will have QR codes. When asked about visually handicapped access, Public Works Director Powers spoke to looking at sound signals or perhaps Braille. This will continue to be looked at.

- Approved annexation agreement to include property located at 1602 E. Boy Scout Road, Chillicothe IL.

New Business:

- Councilor Denis Cyr requested monthly financial report be in regular business going forward vs. consent agenda.
- Chief of Police Eric Echevarria gave update on violence including recent press conference at federal building, increased lighting in downtown area, use of weekend task force to patrol downtown area and continued use of 411 to report crime tips.
- Councilor Kiran Velpula cited tech grant received for more inclusive tech industry growth in agriculture, medicine, and biomedical fields to foster growth in these areas.
- Councilor Chuck Grayeb asked Corporation Counsel Patrick Hayes for update on carbon dioxide pipeline in view of Wolf Carbon filing with Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). Concerns regarding public safety with pipeline were discussed. Councilor Hayes will initiate letter to ICC on city's behalf.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: July 11

Council members approved 90-day moratorium on new tobacco licenses, excluding four licenses pending approval to give city staff time to complete data on percent of revenue from cigarettes/vape products and other data for stand-alone shops. Some concerns shared by members were communication to new businesses, illegal activity and health and safety risks.

Finance Director Kyle Cratty gave an update on budget through May 2023. He mentioned decline in personal property tax \$5,200,000, although this is tracking within budget and not uncommon; overall budget on pace. Councilor Denis Cyr noted cash flow greater than \$200,000 and asked what budget concerns Dir. Cratty has over next 2-4 years. Director Cratty responded that looming recession pension fund obligations were primary concerns. Councilor Andre Allen asked for clarity on the impact of debt service bond for Civic Center.

Community Development Director Joe Dulin announced the recipients of Violence Prevention Program funding for 2023, using American Rescue Plan Act funds. A total of \$1,416,581.31 will be awarded to six groups based on criteria developed by city staff and approved by council members previously. Twenty-six applications were received and reviewed by city staff. The grant funds were approved by council on an individual vote for each applicant after concern regarding awards for Peoria Public Schools and Peoria Health Department, as these governmental bodies also receive funding through tax dollars. The following entities were selected:

- Goodwill Services for Revive Youth Mental Health Support, \$54,115.
- Peoria Family YMCA for teen outreach teaching life skills & tutoring, \$200,000.
- Friendship House for Pathway to the Future, \$287,500.
- Peoria Regional Office Education, Project S.T.A.R.T. to address truancy \$175,000.
- Peoria Health Department, Cure Violence at East Bluff and Southside neighborhoods, \$400,000.
- Peoria Public Schools, Getting to the Roots reading program, \$299,966.

Mayor Rita Ali suggested Council have policy session to discuss concerns members had on current program criteria. It was noted that these same organizations received grant funding last year and had not presented evidence-based data on the impact of the program. Initial program funding was received six months ago.

Other actions taken:

- Approved an intergovernmental agreement with Peoria Civic Center to provide for Operations. This agreement extends through 2028, with first payment due December 2023. Civic Center will hold interest earned in a separate account until spend-down requirements are met. City Manager Patrick Urich mentioned 2023 has been a good year for Civic Center financially to date.
- Approved grant from Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for \$7,000,000 for construction and pre-development work on MacArthur Hwy.

For more details on Council meeting: <https://peoriail.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

————— Connie Romanus, Observer



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

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2023-2024**

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