

Co-Presidents

Julia Turner
2202 Hedgewood
Bloomington, IL 61704
664-6465

Joni Painter
1903 Hedgewood Drive
Bloomington, IL 61704
662-8413
jpainter432@msn.com

Bulletin

Maureen O'Keefe
404 E. Cole St.
Heyworth, IL 61745
309 258-4233 (evening)
766-1277 (daytime)

Membership

Phyllis Versteegh
49 Kenfield Circle
Bloomington, IL 61701
664-5357
pjjversteegh@hotmail.com

Treasurer

Myra Gordon
2 Kent Drive
Normal, 61761
452-8530

The League of Women Voters of McLean County Bulletin is published eight months out of the year. The official address of the League of Women Voters is 1918 Owens, Bloomington, IL 61701. Telephone: 309 663-5166.

Vol. 73 No. 4

Bulletin

Jan. 2007

Important Consensus Meeting

Tuesday, January 23, 2007

**Consensus on Immigration
7:00 p.m.
Government Center
115 East Washington
Bloomington, Illinois**

From the LWVIL's "The League Consensus Meeting: Reaching Member Agreement"

"The Position Statement: The study committee evaluates whether agreement has been reached and drafts a position statement. The position statement:

- Articulates the broad areas of agreement, including what the group supports and opposes.
- Should be broad enough to allow League to initiate, support, or oppose a variety of proposals over a period of time.
- Does not contain minority views.
- Does not contain areas where agreement is not reached.

It is common not to reach agreement on every aspect of a study. The Board judges whether there is substantial agreement among the membership as a whole, and if the answer is yes, adopts the position."

Please review Immigration Study Consensus Questions contained in this issue of the Bulletin.

This meeting is Open to the Public

Dear Members,

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season! On to a new year! The League will continue to provide interesting opportunities for involvement during the coming months.

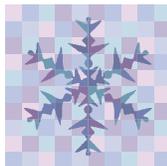
On January 23rd we have a program and consensus meeting on immigration at 7:00 p.m. at the McLean County Government Center. Please come and weigh in with your thoughts and opinions on this very important issue.

Several members of our local League will be presenting a workshop in Chicago on February 3rd at the LWVIL Annual Issues Briefing. The topic of the workshop is "Judicial Independence: Everything You Need to Know to Run a Successful Forum" and it will be led by Laurie Bergner. There will be other programs presented as well that day concerning the state of voting in Illinois and updates on state fiscal policy, assault weapons ban and environmental policy. Please feel free to join us that Saturday for what promises to be an interesting, informative event!

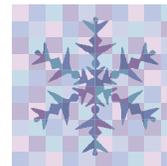
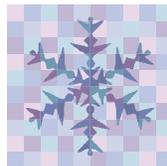
This year we are planning on having our annual dinner/silent auction in March rather than April, so we are already beginning to solicit donations. Although we solicit local businesses, generally our best and most unique items have come from our members. So look around and see if you have any treasures to contribute. If you do, just give me a call and either drop them off at my house, or I can come pick them up. This is our only fundraiser of the year, and we are hoping for a good turn-out.

As you can see, our year is off to a busy start! I hope to see you all at our upcoming events.

Joni



0



Immigration Study Consensus Meeting: January 23

The January 23rd program on Immigration will discuss areas of concern for documented and undocumented immigrants in relation to local and Illinois state law. For the undocumented group, which is sometimes of greater concern to citizens than the documented, it is important to remember that most of them entered the country originally on legal visas, which then ran out, and that many have close family members who are citizens or legal immigrants. While the percentage of unemployment in this group is under 2% and they pay federal and social security taxes, they are currently ineligible for public social services, social security, or unemployment benefits.

The issues we will deal with during our January meeting include education, housing, health care, economic policies, and the role of local police in enforcing federal immigration law. Identification concerns are central to debates involving driver's license and car insurance, ability to open bank accounts, and voting eligibility.

There will be pro and con presentations on each consensus question, with time for questions and discussion. Everyone is invited to attend the program and pose questions. The questions we will consider are included in this issue of the Bulletin. We look forward to your active participation at our January 23rd meeting.

LWW-McLean County to Establish Internet Site

We wish to extend our thanks to League member Mary Lynn Edwards who is building an internet site for our League. The site is in its final stages of development and should be published shortly. Stay tuned for updates on this exciting development.

SAVE THESE DATES!

February 3, 2007: LWVIL Annual Issues Briefing, All Day Event, Chicago

Our League will be presenting a workshop on Judicial Independence in a forum led by Laurie Bergner: "Everything You Need to Know to Have a Successful Forum!" The Board encourages local members to attend and therefore, is sponsoring FREE admission to the first four members of our League who notify us of their interest in attending (see below for details).

February 27 Program: Voting Rights Issues

We are planning a very exciting program on voting rights issues for our February program. We will have panelists discussing these issues from both state and federal perspectives. David Decker, a former member of United States Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez's staff will be a featured speaker.

March 29, 2007 Silent Auction Fundraiser

This year's annual Silent Auction Fundraiser has been moved to THURSDAY, March 29. As Joni mentioned in her letter, start looking for special items to donate now. The Board is planning a very special event this year...more exciting news to follow in next edition of the Bulletin.

LWVIL Annual Issues Briefing

The Board encourages all interested membership to attend this very informative event. The Board is able to sponsor FOUR free admissions to this event. If interested, contact Myra Gordon, 452-8530. Again, the first four members to contact Myra can attend free. Registration materials are contained in this issue of the Bulletin.

League Member Honored

Local League member Jeanne Morris was recently honored as a recipient of the 2007 Reverend Martin Luther King Award for community service. Congratulations Jeanne!

**LWVIL Immigration Study
Consensus Questions Discussion
Winter 2007**

1) Should the State of Illinois promote and fund local community efforts to provide orientation and counseling services for immigrants regardless of documentation status? Possible examples are:

- **assimilation in the community**
- **English as a Second Language (ESL)**
- **financial counseling**
- **housing and child care services or referrals**
- **preventive and emergency health care**
- **transportation assistance**

Discussion points for consensus question:

Immigrants often face significant challenges learning to assimilate and to go about their daily lives after relocating to the United States. The Skokie Library, Family Services of South Lake County and other local groups and organizations in Illinois provide services similar to those listed above. However, these services are not available in other communities.

2) Should the state of Illinois promote and provide funding for educational programs and material that seek to inform immigrant workers, both documented and undocumented, of their rights in the workplace?

Discussion points for consensus question:

Undocumented workers are frequently the victims of exploitation in the workplace because they are frequently employed in “sweatshop” industries that violate one or more state or federal labor laws. While federal labor law currently provides that employers may not lawfully employ undocumented workers, the practice is unquestionably commonplace, especially in certain industries. Under current Supreme Court law, unlawfully discharged undocumented workers are not entitled to reinstatement or back pay. They also live in fear of retaliation and deportation if they inform authorities or speak up regarding inhumane or exploitative working conditions. However, undocumented immigrants are legally permitted to unionize. While immigrant workers are generally entitled to the same protections against anti-discrimination as those afforded to U.S. citizens in the workplace, they may not be aware of these protections.

3) Should the State of Illinois:

- a. provide “driving certificate” or some other form of proof of driving validation to undocumented drivers, which would allow those drivers to drive legally and ensure that they would have passed a state driving test?**
- b. permit and encourage auto insurance providers to issue insurance coverage to holders of such driving certificates?**

Discussion points for consensus question:

Under the 2005 federal Real ID Law, by 2008 states may only issue driver’s licenses to citizens or legal immigrants if such licenses are to be valid for official federal purposes (e.g. getting on an airplane). If the legal immigrant applicant is in the U.S. on a temporary visa, the license can only be considered valid for the duration of that visa. Among other provisions, the law requires the states to adopt standardized features for driver’s licenses. It also requires the states to validate citizenship or legal immigration status of the license applicant, to verify that the documents used for such validation were legitimate, and to store copies of those documents for 7 to 10 years, depending on whether they were paper or electronic.

4) Should the State of Illinois require financial institutions doing business in Illinois to accept as legal forms of ID such documents as tax identification numbers, consular cards, or passports issued by countries of origin?

Discussion points for consensus question:

Proof of identity documents, including driver's licenses and social security numbers, are now required by many financial institutions in order to open savings or checking accounts. As a result, immigrants are reluctant to use these financial institutions, and consequently are targeted by criminals who know that they carry large sums of cash around or maintain their savings in their residence. In addition, institutions such as currency exchanges and other check-cashing outlets charge higher fees for transferring funds to family in foreign countries. By 2009, under the provisions of the federal Real ID Law, alternative forms of identification will become even more important.

Illinois has a law that permits mortgages at less than market rate to be made to undocumented persons who, because of lacking identification, cannot get traditional mortgages from banks; however, that law does not require financial institutions to accept the consular card. Many financial institutions are beginning to do so in order to reap the gains of this substantial untapped source of business and profits (for example, only roughly 9% of Mexican undocumented persons currently have access to banking services).

5) Should the State of Illinois create a set-aside fund to help local taxing bodies offset the costs of the use of public education and emergency healthcare by undocumented immigrants and their families?

Discussion points for consensus question:

Some studies show that undocumented immigrants burden local economies by using the public schools (K-12) and emergency healthcare services. Many undocumented immigrants pay state and federal taxes that are not necessarily redirected to cover the costs of the services that they have utilized. Moreover, although the undocumented are ineligible to receive unemployment benefits, employers pay unemployment insurance taxes on their behalf. Often, undocumented immigrants often do not collect tax refunds that may be owed to them. Other policy makers argue that the economic contributions of undocumented workers far exceed the cost of these services that they consume.

6) Should the State of Illinois empower local communities and municipalities to allow:

- a. documented immigrants the right to vote in certain local elections, provided that those immigrants have proof of residency?**
- b. undocumented immigrants the right to vote in certain local elections, provided that those immigrants have proof of residency?**

Such elections might include the local school board, city council or park district, or other taxing bodies.

Discussion points for consensus question:

Proponents argue that immigrant (or non-citizen) voting is not expressly prohibited by the U.S. Constitution, and that it supports the democratic principle of the universal franchise as well as being consistent with the democratic principle of "no taxation without representation." Furthermore, while legal immigrants must sometimes wait for as long as 10 years to become citizens, they are paying a variety of taxes; voting may stimulate their interest and skill in participatory government.

Opponents of immigrant voting rights argue that the Illinois constitution requires U.S. citizenship for voter registration in the state (the Illinois legislature approved an exception to allow non-citizens who prove district residency the right to vote in Chicago's local school council elections). It is possible that non-citizens could vote collectively against the best interests of the community in favor of narrow interests that require extensive general funding. Lastly, opponents claim that immigrant voting rights could undermine the incentive to become a citizen and contribute to election fraud.

7) Should states or localities enact legislation or ordinances to:

- a. penalize landlords for renting to undocumented immigrants?**
- b. prohibit the issuance of business permits to the undocumented?**

Discussion points for consensus question:

Hazleton, Pennsylvania and some other communities have involved themselves in the broader national debate on immigration by approving ordinances to prohibit undocumented immigrants from renting apartments and securing business licenses.

8) Should state and local police be deputized so that they can enforce immigration laws in Illinois?

Discussion point for consensus question:

In 2002, the U.S. Justice Department confirmed the “inherent authority” of state and local police to enforce federal immigration laws. In addition, various legislative proposals under consideration in Congress would require that state and local police enforce immigration laws or lose access to certain federal funds. On the other hand, some states, cities and counties have laws on the books that limit local involvement in the enforcement of civil (non-criminal) immigration laws. That said, some states, including Florida and South Carolina, have taken steps to deputize their police to enforce immigration laws (Source: State and Local Police Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law, American Immigration Lawyers Association, 3/06).

Because the legal status of an immigrant may be revealed during the course of a routine traffic stop, where identification documents are needed, this enhanced police power is a serious concern for immigrants. In addition, some police departments argue against the proposal not only because they lack the proper training, but also because they are eager to maintain good relationships with immigrant communities and are already overstretched with other duties. Cook County Commissioner Roberto Maldonado has proposed a non-binding resolution to designate Cook County as a “sanctuary” for undocumented immigrants. The resolution suggests that Cook County employers be discouraged from inquiring about immigration status during everyday interactions with persons in the community so that untrained and inexperienced county employees do not become involved in immigration matters. Proponents of leaving immigration matters to federal authorities argue that immigrants need to know that they can approach local authorities and police, for assistance or to report criminal activity, without fear of deportation or other unintended consequences.

Final page of:

Immigration Study Consensus Questions

LWV-McLean County
January 23, 2007