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Vol. 73 No.5

Bulletin

Feb. 2007

League of Women Voters Presents a Very Special Program:

Voting in the Crosshairs:

A Look at Potential Threats to our Electoral System

7:00 PM

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Government Center

115 East Washington

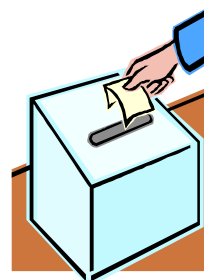
Bloomington, IL

(Enter building on Front Street; take elevator to basement and follow the signs.)

Featuring:

David Becker, Senior Staff Attorney for People of the American Way Foundation

Cristina Cray, Director of Legislation for the Illinois State Board of Elections



Bring a Guest!

Dear League Members,

What would February in Central Illinois be without a little excitement from the weather? I hope that all of you have recovered from our blizzard and that all the snow will be gone by our Tuesday March 27th program. We have a very exciting national speaker this month. Please refer to the program announcement in this newsletter for all of the specifics.

Laurie Bergner, Julie Sullivan and I had the pleasure of hosting a breakout session at the State League's Issues Briefing on Saturday, February 3. We shared our experience in hosting the day-long judicial forum in October. Nearly thirty league members from throughout the state attended the session and posed very good questions. It is always rewarding to share an experience and lessons learned with others. All of us who attended the Issues Briefing heard great information on electronic voting, education funding, and immigration, among other topics.

Lobby Day is March 14th. If anyone is interested in attending, please contact me at Julia.turner@inisighbb.com. I'm sure we'll be sending more information to all of you via e-mail in the next few weeks.

Our Annual Dinner and Silent Auction will be held on Thursday, March 29th this year, so save the date. We always get great donations from local businesses and league members. If any of you have any donations or would like to help in any way with our only fundraiser for the year, I'd be happy to have you on my committee. Just send me a note or give me or any other board member a call.

Our nominating committee is looking for board candidates for next year. If you are interested in serving on the board or know of someone whose talents have yet to be tapped, please let us know. We are so fortunate to have such a wonderful and active membership, serving as a board member is a great way to get to know many of the members!

We have an exciting couple of months ahead of us, great programs, our annual dinner and the elections right around the corner. Welcome Spring!

Sincerely,

Julia

Don't Miss This Month's Program!

- States requiring photo voter IDs and registration laws that work to disenfranchise voters.
- States that refuse convicted felons the right to vote for the rest of their lives, even after they have served their sentences.
- Redistricting plans that diminish the ability of non-incumbents to win elections, thus reducing the democratic ideal that anyone can run for office.
- Un-auditable paperless voting machines that disenfranchised 18,000 voters in the congressional race in Sarasota County, Florida.

Voting rights in America has been an issue throughout our history, but in recent years, it has been once again been in the crosshairs. Hanging chads led to new voting machines whose problems have still to be resolved; several states have passed ID requirements that have been given oversight by the federal government, as have other laws on minority language voter rights, alleged voter intimidation, vote dilution and redistricting.

How has our federal government, charged with ensuring that states cannot pass any laws that result in disenfranchising voters, been living up to its obligation? And what exactly is our own state of Illinois doing regarding voting rights and redistricting?

These urgent and intriguing questions will be addressed in a February 27 program presented by the McLean County League of Women Voters, "Voting in the Crosshairs: A look at potential threats to our electoral system." Two distinguished speakers, one who has worked in our federal government and the other in our Illinois State Board of Elections, will address these issues.

We are pleased with the speakers we've lined up to discuss these very important issues. They are:

David Becker, Senior Staff Attorney for People of the American Way Foundation (PFAWF) is responsible for issues regarding voting rights and civil liberties. David recently left the U.S. Department of Justice after serving for seven years as a senior Trial Attorney in the Voting Section of the department's Civil Rights Division. As one of the department's senior federal voting rights law enforcers, David was responsible for leading dozens of investigations into violations of federal voting laws, regarding issues including minority language voter rights, redistricting, alleged voter intimidation, and vote dilution. David is one of the most experienced voting rights litigators in the country, having litigated several Voting Rights Act cases as lead counsel.

Most notably, in one of the most pivotal voting rights cases in the last decade, David served as lead trial counsel supervising the U. S. seven-attorney team before the three-judge federal court in *Georgia v. Ashcroft*. He advised the Solicitor General on appeal to the Supreme Court, which resulted in a landmark 5-4 opinion in 2003, for which effort he was awarded the department's Special Commendation for Merit. In addition to his redistricting expertise, David is one of the country's foremost experts on compliance with federal voter access and minority language requirements. Serving as lead counsel responsible for minority language compliance in some of the largest and most diverse jurisdictions in the nation, he helped fashion permanent programs that built bridges between election officials and the minority language community while providing cutting-edge services that expand access to the polls for all voters.

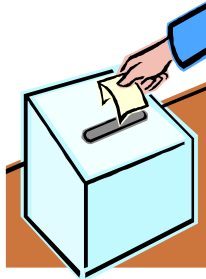
David has been involved with international democracy building efforts, monitoring the 2005 Egyptian presidential and parliamentary elections and the 2005 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. He also worked with Congress towards the recent reauthorization of the Voting

Rights Act, and he testified before the Ohio Legislature regarding redistricting reform

Cristina Cray is Director of Legislation for the Illinois State Board of Elections. In this capacity, she helps implement federal election legislation, serving as National Voter Registration Act Coordinator and as liaison between the State Board and county clerks, municipal election authorities, the Illinois Congressional Delegation, Illinois State Senators and Representatives, Constitutional Officers, agencies and staff. She conducts research and develops new legislation. Previous to this position, Cristina assisted the Lieutenant Governor, organizing the legislative office.

As you can see, both of these speakers are uniquely qualified to address the important issues regarding voting rights and redistricting in the United States and in Illinois. Both are involved with the practical issues of what is occurring in this active and crucial area.

The program will take place at the Government Building at East and Front Streets in downtown Bloomington from 7:00-9:00 pm. It is free and open to the public.



Save the Date - March 29: Silent Auction Fundraiser

We have moved this year's Silent Auction Fundraiser up a month to **Thursday, March 29**. Our event will be held at the Eastland Suites. We will be mailing invitations to membership in late February containing details regarding our speaker and program.

For now, we'd like to solicit our membership for items you'd like to contribute to the Auction. In order to make this year's fundraiser a success, please donate your own unique arts, crafts, services, or anything else you deem appropriate.

For example, ask the shop where you get your hair done or a restaurant where you like to eat to contribute a gift certificate. It's good publicity for them and a good fundraiser for the important work of our League. Examples of items we've received in the past from our members and the merchants you patronize include:

- Food and wine baskets with a unique theme
- Gardening Services donated by League Members
- Handyman Services donated by League Members
- Handmade crafts (soaps, wood working, candles, jewelry, quilts, etc.)
- Unique books
- Overnight stay at Bloomington's Chateau
- Barbeque Grill and tools
- Gift Certificates Galore
- Specialty Artwork and Giftware
- Much More

Please contact Julia Turner if you have questions or items to donate. Contact Julia at:664-6465, or julia.turner@insightbb.com

Spotlight on New Members

MIRIAM LAPHAM -- Is pleased to join us. She believes in our work and says she "believes in giving money where she thinks it belongs." Miriam, we're looking forward to your active participation in our League.

LINDA STOCKTON – Is a manager in Learning and Development at State Farm. She is active in a wide array of community activities (Easter Seals, Symphony Board, Republican Women). Her avid interest in government and

politics drew her to League where we're sure she'll make many fine contributions to our efforts.

LEISA BARBOUR – Is a teacher at Colene Hoose Elementary. Leisa wants to be more aware of community issues. She'll have more time for things she's interested in as she just sent her youngest off to college.

Voter Services Update

Our Voter Services area is planning an early April Forum for those candidates running for Normal Town Council and Bloomington City Council. We will inform membership via email and our next Bulletin of the date and location for this event.

Consider Being a League Observer

One of the best ways for new members to learn about League and become more educated about how your local government functions is to become an official League of Women Voters Observers. McLean County offers us a wide array of opportunities for observing local government in action, so many in fact, we often have difficulty observing them all.

Some of the entities we observe meet twice a month, good examples being District 87 and Unit 5 School Boards. While observing twice a month may be more of than you'd like to take on, we can always assign team observers who split duties over the course of the year.

Our League continues to recruit volunteer Observers because we know doing so because we've been successful in forcing the issue of holding open meetings of certain civic groups and developing active candidates for local office. For example, League member Jane Turley has been an active Observer of the County Health Board for several years and was recently appointed to that Board. Former Mayor Judy Markowitz was also a League Observer for

Bloomington City Council before she ran for office.

Currently we have several observer positions that remain unfilled: McLean County Board, Unit 5, District 87, the Health Board, and the Regional Planning Commission. If you are interested in becoming a League Observer, please contact Marilyn Kammler at 662-3897.

Reminder: Deputy Registrar Training

An email on this topic was sent to members in early February, but we're including this in the Bulletin as a second reminder. As of Thursday, November 30, 2006, the former term for Deputy Registrars ended. A new term began on Friday, December 1, 2006 and will end Sunday, November 30, 2008. Participants in the former term need to renew their oath to continue registering citizens to vote.

Individuals who have been through a training course **within the past year** may stop by the County Clerk's office to be re-deputized and obtain new materials if necessary.

Those individuals who **have not had training within the past year** and who wish to be deputized are asked to attend training so they can be informed of changes that have occurred. Training sessions have been scheduled for the dates listed below. If you are interested, please contact Anne Nadakavukaren (829-1889). There are two dates remaining for possible training:

Friday, March 9th, 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13th, 9:30 p.m.

School Funding Reform

The League of Women Voters has been active for many years on the issue of School Funding Reform. Vickie Mahrt, of the Coalition for School Funding Reform feels 2007 could be the year meaningful school funding reform comes is finally enacted here in Illinois.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, The Metropolitan Mayors' Caucus, House Speaker Michael Madigan, Senate President Emil Jones and a new 90+ member, bipartisan legislative Education Caucus have all pledged their support to fix Illinois school funding.

Around the state, groups concerned with this issue are ramping up their efforts with meetings, rallies, lobbying efforts and advertising. The Illinois Education Association has purchased television ads in all major Illinois markets to begin airing February 17.

Here in Central Illinois, local efforts are also ramping up in support of school funding reform. If you are interested in participating, have ideas for reaching out to the public or legislators on this issue, we urge you to contact **Vickie Mahrt**, Coalition for School Funding Reform, at **309 838-6968**.

Results from Immigration Consensus Meeting – January 23, 2007

On January 23 our League gathered for a Consensus Meeting on Immigration. The following information details our results. Thank you to Anne Nadakavukaren for recording the meeting.

IMMIGRATION STUDY CONSENSUS DISCUSSION

January 23, 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?

Responses from members:

- a) Outside sources of funding should be explored further.
- b) State should provide funding if other sources aren't providing necessary resources.
- c) Morally, yes; realistically, where is the money going to come from? Some of the listed services, like ESL, are more critical than others, so if priorities must be set, then those programs should get the money.
- d) State funding of such services may not be a good idea because it could encourage illegal immigration.
- e) We shouldn't use McLean County as a representative example, because our county's resources far surpass those of many other counties; providing orientation services doesn't encourage illegals to come; once they're here, it's beneficial to the larger community to allow access to these services. Not providing such services out of fear that some illegals might benefit is similar to "cutting off your nose to spite your face".

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?

Responses from members:

- a) Providing funding for educational materials for the undocumented isn't going to have much of an impact because those individuals are going to remain out-of-sight in the underground community; however, doing so would be advantageous for legal immigrants.
- b) It's outrageous that efforts aren't being pursued to prosecute employers who hire these people.

- c) Since industry is largely responsible for the illegal immigration problem, industry should pay for these programs to educate migrant workers.
- d) The question is irrelevant, since the State already posts such notices. Enforcement is the real issue, but the question doesn't address this.

3) Should the State of Illinois provide “driving certificates”...and permit and encourage auto insurance providers to issue insurance coverage to holders of such certificates?

Responses from members:

- a) Since they're going to drive anyway, it makes sense to let them pay to get a legal document and to be able to get insurance.
- b) If the State makes drivers' certificates available, it only makes sense to allow immigrants access to insurance, regardless of their documentation status.

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

Responses from members:

- a) Federal law may make this question moot
- b) Several members objected to the compulsory implications of the word “require”; recommended that LWVIL change it to “allow.”

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 health care by undocumented immigrants and their families?

Responses from members:

- a) State should do this to create a more level playing field; State may not have money now, but it could raise taxes to cover these costs.

- b) Federal, not State, funds should be tapped for this purpose (two members voiced this sentiment).
- c) State should try to provide at least some funding for this important service.

6) Should the State of Illinois empower local communities and municipalities to allow documented immigrants the right to vote in certain local elections.....? Should undocumented immigrants have this same right, provided they have proof of residency?

Responses from members:

- a) If non-citizens are allowed to vote in local elections, it would give them more reason to get involved and become informed about issues.
- b) In big cities, immigrant populations could be manipulated to vote for certain ethnic candidates.
- c) Citizens might soon be outnumbered by non-citizens who would then control things.

7) Should states or localities enact legislation or ordinances to penalize landlords for renting to undocumented immigrants or prohibit the issuance of business permits to the undocumented?

Responses from members:

- a) It is often impossible for employers/landlords to know whether documentation is legitimate or forged.
- b) Such legislation could have the unintended effect of increasing discrimination against legal immigrants of the same ethnic group.
- c) The law in Hazelton, PA, that inspired this question has recently been declared unconstitutional.

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

Response from members:

Group sentiment was unanimously opposed to this idea; police are not trained for this sort of work and the police themselves don't want such authority.