



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF McLEAN COUNTY

Co-Presidents

Phylis VerSteegh
49 Kenfield Circle
Bloomington, IL 61704
309-664-5357
info@lwvmclean.org

Maureen O'Keefe
501 Centennial Avenue
Normal, IL 61761
309-258-4233
info@lwvmclean.org

Membership

Becky Hines
517 Kreitzer Avenue
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-828-6140
membership@lwvmclean.org

Treasurer

Linda Stockton
19 Brompton Court
Bloomington, IL 61704
309-663-5244
treasurer@lwvmclean.org

Bulletin

Charlette Elm
30 Stonebrook Court
Bloomington, IL 61704
309-664-5857
bulletin@lwvmclean.org

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of LWV of McLean County
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**The official address of the
LWV of McLean County is
1918 Owens Drive
Bloomington, IL 61701
Telephone: 309-663-5166**

**New web site!
www.lwvmclean.org**

**LWVIL – www.lwvil.org
LWVUS – www.lwv.org**

The Voter

Vol. 78 No. 7 of McLean County April 2012

LWV 2012 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Wednesday • March 28 • 5:30 pm

Moses Montefiore Temple • 102 Robinhood Lane • Bloomington

Colombia: Violence and Beyond Violence: Government, Politics and Culture

Speakers:

Laurie Bergner, LWV of McLean County Program Chair

Dr. Michael Weis, IWU professor who specializes
in South America will provide commentary on the presentation

Free Chili Dinner at 5:30 pm • Program begins at 6:30 pm

• More information on page 3 •

Wednesday • April 4 • 7:00 pm

Normal Public Library • Community Room

Reining in Big Brother in the Age of Personal Technology

Co-sponsored with American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois

Speakers:

Edwin Yohnka ACLU of Illinois,
Director of Communications and Public Policy

Representative (TBA)

of the US Attorney's Office in Central IL

• More information on page 3 •

Tuesday • April 17, 2012 • 5:00 pm

Holiday Inn Hotel • 3202 E. Empire • Bloomington

LWV of McLean Annual Dinner

Speakers: **Paul Harmon**, Airport Authority Chairman

Carl Olson, CIRA Executive Director

• More information on page 7 •

Tuesday • May 22, 2012

LWV of McLean County Annual Meeting

From the desk of . . . Co-Presidents Phylis VerSteegh and Maureen O'Keefe

Spring brings us many new things – longer daylight hours (love it!), warmer weather (love it!), new flowers, bushes, and buds on trees (they're already here), as well as new League events (you will enjoy them too).

There are two special League events this spring which you will not want to miss – our Annual Fundraising Dinner on Wednesday, April 17 (it will be different from past ones so check out details in this Voter) and the annual meeting on May 22. This is an important meeting as we will accept officers and board members for next year, vote on League program positions, adopt next year's budget and hear any proposals for new League studies. The next Voter issue will have annual meeting details.

One more monthly program you won't want to miss is planned for March 28. It includes a free chili supper. More details are on page 3 in this Voter edition.

I recently spoke to a group of young women in McHenry County who are aware of the importance of becoming active and informed about political issues. They are excited about learning and getting organized to make a difference. Their excitement is contagious. I came home even more enthused to help educate voters about political issues and about helping people become eligible to vote. I hope my excitement is also contagious and that more members will get involved in League activities. There are so many different things to do.

Please **REMEMBER TO VOTE ON MARCH 20.**

It's your right, your privilege, and your chance to make a difference.

Hope to see you at these League events! . . . Phylis

Becky Hines, LWV of McLean County Membership Chair, reports we currently have a total of **123 members** and adds that the renewal date for Memberships received no later than April 1, 2012 is extended to September 30, 2013.

\$60 Individual member

\$30 Second household member

\$30 Full-time student

Please make checks payable to ***League of Women Voters of McLean County***

and send to: Becky Hines, 517 Kreitzer Avenue, Bloomington, IL 61701

Speakers Wanted!

The LWV of McLean County is organizing a speaker's bureau to inform various organizations and institutions of the work of the League.

Materials and resources are under development for use during these sessions and will be reviewed during a training session in late April/early May.

If you are interested in participating as a speaker to share the League story or have questions, please contact Kathy Tosh at kn.ttosh@comcast.net or 309-530-2050.

Wednesday • March 28 • 5:30 pm
Moses Montefiore Temple • 102 Robinhood Lane • Bloomington

Colombia: Violence and Beyond Violence: Government, Politics and Culture

Hear the inside story of the government, politics and culture of this fascinating country. Find out about the guerillas and paramilitary, assassinations and bombings, but get beyond that to the rest of the story that we rarely hear about.

The program will be presented by **Laurie Bergner**, who hosted Colombian elected officials in October 2010, and participated in an exchange trip to Colombia last March.

Commentary on the presentation will be provided by **Dr. Michael Weis**, Illinois Wesleyan professor who specializes in South America.

Free Chili Dinner at 5:30 pm • Program begins at 6:30 pm

Saturday • March 31 • 8:30 pm - 9:30pm

'Earth Hour' is coming up again!

The League of Women Voters has participated previously and we hope you will take part again this year. As you know, participants from all across the globe will turn off their nonessential lights and equipment for one hour in a symbolic effort to raise awareness about the impact of excessive energy use and how it contributes to global climate change. Last year 135 countries took part in the campaign to show that individuals really can make a difference in their energy use.

Earth Hour in Bloomington-Normal involves cooperative action in order to make the community more green and sustainable. It is important to reduce energy and carbon emissions, so Earth Hour and the participation of the community can help us further efforts to reduce our ecological footprint. Thank you for helping with this effort.

Wednesday, April 4, 7:00 p.m.
Normal Public Library's Community Room

Reining in Big Brother in the Era of Personal Technology

Co-sponsored with the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois

As personal technology gets more widely used, it brings special issues for civil liberties. A recent Supreme Court decision dealt with the use of GPS devices for tracking suspected drug dealers.

Participants will include -

Edwin Yohnka, Director of Communications and Public Policy for the ACLU of Illinois, and a representative from the U.S. Attorney's office in Central Illinois.

Observer's Report:

Bloomington Public School District 87 – Board of Education

The District 87 Board of Education meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Educational Services Center, 300 E. Monroe Street, Bloomington. The seven members of the board are elected at large for four-year terms. The nonpartisan consolidated elections are held on the first Tuesday in April of odd numbered years.

More information about the district can be found at: <http://www.district87.org>.

Present members of the board are:

President - Michael Harrison Vice President - Joe Butcher
Millicent Roth Steve Perry Judith Webster John Dirks Mary Yount.

The board represents a diverse cross section of the community, including gender, age, ethnicity, and occupation. Exceptions are that three of the seven members are State Farm employees and there is no Latino representation. Three of the members are graduates of District 87 schools.

Agendas are clear and available to the public. Meetings begin with a call to order and the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Harrison runs very efficient meetings using Roberts Rules of Order. The atmosphere is business-like, yet cordial. Regularly on the agenda are committee reports and informational administrative reports. There are standing committees and special committees that meet outside of the board meeting and report to the board. After these reports or presentations, board members question and discuss the information presented. The board takes action on many items by consent agenda. Materials for the consent agenda are provided to board members before each meeting. These appear to be items previously presented and discussed, as in all the meetings attended, they were approved without discussion. Board action on items not included in the consent agenda are discussed and voted on separately. Personnel issues may be handled in Closed Session. Board members work as a team but are not afraid to disagree, discuss, or ask questions.

Audience attendance varies depending on the issues or business at hand. The room may be packed if there is a divisive issue or if a group is being recognized, but generally there are just a few observers. Often on the agenda is recognition of personnel or students. Requests for public presentations must be submitted in writing to the Board President or Superintendent at least 24 hours in advance and are subject to approval. Public comment is taken at the end of each meeting. Special public hearings include time for public comment before action is taken. Press is present and generally reports information accurately.

Significant items of discussion this year have been:

- Regular maintenance of schools plus a major renovation of the BHS library into a Media Center.
- A new personnel evaluation to be implemented in Fall 2012 in compliance with the *Race to the Top Initiative*. Four areas of evaluation will include: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities.
- Vision and goal-setting sessions which will include members of the community in addition to Board members.

The board carries out its intended function quite well in an organized and efficient manner. While it is certainly concerned with representing the taxpayers it serves, there is a genuine concern for the well-being of students and the educational environment of District 87. Board members are not compensated, so the many hours of work and responsibility are a vital public service. This board is facing difficult decisions concerning budget cuts, while maintaining excellent educational programming.

- Submitted by: Judie Bey, Gary Hoover, and Alexis Kalish

Observer's Report: **Normal Town Council**

The Normal Town Council consists of the Mayor and 6 Council members. The elections are nonpartisan and there are no wards. Three Council positions are up for election every two years, each voter can vote for three candidates, and the three with the most votes are elected. Mayor Koos and Council members Chambers, Gaines, and Nielsen were reelected in April 2009 for four-year terms. Council members Fritzen, Reece, and Scott were reelected in 2011. Salaries are \$18,000 for the Mayor and \$4,800 for each Council member. The position of Mayor is time consuming, but fortunately Mayor Koos has a business (Vitesse) that allows a flexible schedule.

The Mayor and Council members have assigned places in a U-shaped seating arrangement, along with the Corporation Counsel, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, and Town Clerk. Meetings are held the 1st and 3rd Mondays each month. For each meeting the agenda, a report with details about the agenda (running around 100 pages), the minutes, and a video of the meeting are available on line at <http://www.normal.org/index.aspx?NID=96>

Although the revamped website no longer says so, the video is shown at 6 p.m. Tuesday and 10 a.m. Saturday following the actual meeting on Comcast public access TV channel 20.

Occasionally the Normal Liquor Commission, which has the same membership as the Council, meets prior to the Council meeting. They grant liquor licenses, issue fines and reprimands, and sometimes revoke liquor licenses.

Meetings are covered by The Pantagraph, ISU Vidette, the Normalite, and WJBC.

A typical audience is 15-20 people, including Town of Normal staff, ISU students assigned to attend, and Town of Normal citizens. Town staff members, and occasionally others, are sometimes invited to speak to the Council from a table at the open end of the U-shaped seating arrangement. Usually, this is at the request of City Manager Mark Peterson to assist him in providing details about an agenda item. There is provision for citizen input, as indicated by this from the Town of Normal website <http://www.normal.org/index.aspx?NID=97>:

If you wish to appear at a public meeting to support or oppose an issue being considered by the Town Council please contact the Administration Department at 309-454-9777 or via email to mpeterson@normal.org or preece@normal.org.

The Council employs an Omnibus Vote Agenda, which consists of non-controversial items such as acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting and routine expenditures. There are usually 7 to 10 items, and the whole list is passed on one vote without discussion. If a Council member has an issue with an item or believes that it needs further explanation, then it is removed from the list and it is discussed separately.

Mayor Koos does an excellent job of conducting the meetings as he moves the agenda along while encouraging discussion of each item. Council members seem well-informed on the issues – they have done their homework. Usually, all Council members are present. Most agenda items pass either unanimously or with one or two dissenting votes, but an occasional agenda item is voted down. The general atmosphere at the meetings is positive and respectful. Occasionally meetings are adjourned after less than 30 minutes, but sometimes they last more than 2 hours.

- Submitted by: Ken Berk and Jana Edge

McLean County Jail Review Committee

The McLean County Jail Review Committee is a citizens' group founded in 1980 at the suggestion of Sheriff Steve Brienen. It is a free-standing volunteer body whose members are appointed by various community groups to serve as their representatives. I'm the representative for the LWV. The Jail Review Committee meets five times each year and has special meetings at any time upon the request of three members. The Sheriff also appoints a McLean County jail staff person to serve on the committee.

The purpose of the McLean County Jail Review Committee is to:

1. Identify areas of concern which may exist regarding the conditions within the McLean County Jail, and the general administration of that facility.
2. Bring these areas of concern to the attention of the jail administration and other public officials who are in a position to resolve them.
3. Recommend solutions to the problems that have been identified.
4. Seek the support of other organizations and the public at large in addressing these areas of concern.
5. Advocate educational and socialization programs designed to aid inmates in their re-entry into community life.
6. Assist in educating the public regarding matters pertinent to the jail.

Please feel free to contact me if you have areas of concern that may be applicable for the Jail Review Committee to address.

Gary Hoover, LWV Representative, McLean County Jail Review Committee

Court Observers

We had an excellent training provided by Judge Casey Costigan on how judges deal with pro se defendants (defendants who represent themselves without the aid of an attorney). We all learned a great deal, and I think that he enjoyed the lively discussion too.

- submitted by: Laurie Bergner, LWV of McLean County Program Chair

Immigration Issues

Laurie Bergner is working as the League representative with Kathleen O'Gorman and Jose Garcia of IWU, and Marti Jones, executive director of the Immigration Project, to form a coalition to work on immigration issues. The coalition has two goals: one is to work toward the passage of a drivers license or drivers certificate, which would allow undocumented immigrants with certain identification to be able to drive legally, and to get car insurance; and the other is to keep alive a conversation with Sheriff Emery on his non-discretionary policy regarding giving information for all non-US born arrestees to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). These goals are in line with the LWVIL position on immigration.

Our March 8 program on immigration issues was part of our strategy to make the wider community aware of the issues. Sheriff Emery attended the program. We are working with an excellent organization from Chicago, ICIRR (Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights) on the driver's license issue. To that end, we met with Rep. Dan Brady, who supported the driver certificate bill when it was introduced in 2007, and also attended a lobby day in Springfield, where we met with Senator Bill Brady.

League of Women Voters of McLean County
Annual Dinner and Silent Auction is approaching in April
We Need Your Help!

Our League will be holding a Silent Auction Fundraiser on April 17th at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Bloomington (across Route 9 from the Central Illinois Regional Airport - CIRA). Our speakers will be Paul Harmon and Carl Olson who will discuss the airport, its impact on the community, and the economics of proposed upcoming changes at CIRA.

So what's a streamlined Silent Auction? Our experience with Silent Auctions has taught us that a modest number of items such as gift certificates to theater events, hotels, and restaurants packaged in gift baskets featuring unique themes are very well received. Therefore, we're planning to bring back some of the crowd pleasers from Silent Auctions we've done in the past including:

- Pretty baskets or other containers (i.e., fancy gift boxes) that we can use to package and present our auction items
- Jewelry (new or used in good condition), scarves
- Candles, candle sticks, decorative tart burners, votives, tarts, etc.
- Packaged food and/or snacks: Chocolates, olive oil, assorted vinegars, spreads, crackers, cookies, mixed nuts, etc.
- Soaps, bubble bath, bath oils, shower gels, bath accessories
- Pretty note cards of any kind. Some members have donated their beautiful hand-made note cards...Planners/journals
- Coffee and/or tins of tea, coffee cups/wine goblets
- Flower vases/flower arrangements
- *Any gift certificates you choose to donate....*

▪ ▪ ▪

We are happy to arrange to pick up your auction items if necessary.

So if you have donations for our League's 2012 Silent Auction Fundraiser, please contact:

Maureen O'Keefe ▪ 501 Centennial Avenue ▪ Normal, IL 61761
Daytime Number: 309-766-1277 ▪ Evening Number: 309-258-4233
Email: mokbg@comcast.net



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OF McLEAN COUNTY

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-----OUR LEAGUE IN ACTION -----

Among other things, League members have done the following:

- Attended the Women's International Day breakfast, co-sponsored by League, Soroptimists, and AAUW;
- Continued to contact legislators about important issues;
- Conducted interviews with two local legislators;
- Held two informative forums with candidates for county offices;
- Continued our court observation program and the ongoing observation of many different area boards and organizations;
- Written an online voters' guide which is on our website (lwvmclean.org);
- Registered many new voters; and
- Held another successful monthly program on immigration.

REMEMBER TO VOTE ON MARCH 20!

COME TO OUR ANNUAL DINNER ON APRIL 17!

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK; OUR WEBSITE IS www.lwvmclean.org!