



# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF McLEAN COUNTY

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# The Voter

Vol. 79 No. 2 of McLean County October 2012

## LWV 2012-2013 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Monday, October 15, 2012 • 6:30 - 8:45 pm  
Normal Public Library Community Room

### The November Ballot's 3 R's - Referendum, Referendum, Referendum!

Not aware of the three major referenda on this coming ballot?  
You're not alone. Come and get literate about the 3 R's...

- County Board's referendum to put the Recorder's office into the County Clerk's office;
- Electricity aggregation for Town of Normal, Village of Heyworth and Randolph Township;
- Constitutional Amendment regarding the way all future pension laws will be voted on in the State legislature.

All three referenda will be discussed by experts in these areas.

More information begins on page 5.

### Save the Date!---

Monday, November 12, 2012 • 7:00 pm  
IWU's Hansen Center

### Health Reform

Program Speaker: **Wendell Potter**

### 'Fun and Fundraising'

### Wine Tasting

Planning is under way for an enjoyable event in December  
hosted by LWV of McLean County

More information will be available in the next Voter  
and at [www.lwvmclean.org](http://www.lwvmclean.org)

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

League members frequently hear that we are a nonpartisan political organization. But what does that really mean? We are nonpartisan in that the League never supports or opposes any candidate for elective office or any political party. Political in that it does act on those governmental issues selected by members and on which a position has been reached through study and member agreement. This statement has renewed resonance as we head into the 2012 elections.

We believe that participation in politics is the core of democracy and, with the exception of certain Board positions, urge members to openly support the party and candidates of their choice. It's fine to say, "I support Candidate X," but it is NOT okay to say, "I'm in the League of Women Voters and I support Candidate X." In other words, you cannot imply that the League supports or opposes any candidate. The President of the League, or his/her designee, is the League's only official spokesperson. Just remember to talk ABOUT the League but not FOR the League. Adhering to these guidelines for over 90 years is what has made the League of Women Voters the highly respected organization that it is!

Feel free to contact me or Co-president Maureen O'Keefe if you have any questions.

Happy Fall and enjoy this busy election season!

. . . Phylis

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

- Over 75 people attended our annual membership kick-off event and learned a lot from our entertaining speaker, Dr. Lane Crothers;
- We presented the 2012 Florence Fifer Bohrer Award to Mike Matejka;
- Our dedicated voter registrars are conducting voter registration drives at local high schools, on college campuses and for other groups;
- We are educating students about the voting process;
- We are developing a speakers' bureau which will be able to present short programs about the League of Women Voters to community and civic groups;
- We are developing a poll watchers program and will observe selected voting precincts on November 3rd;
- We are working on an online Voters Guide (watch our website).

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**VISIT US ON FACEBOOK AND BECOME A FRIEND**

**OUR WEBSITE IS [www.lwvmclean.org](http://www.lwvmclean.org)**

College students are getting involved in the democratic process ahead of the general election in November. Heartland Community College hosted a voter registration drive in conjunction with a National Event serving the same purpose. Watch a clip at - [http://centralillinoisproud.com/fulltext/?nxd\\_id=275402](http://centralillinoisproud.com/fulltext/?nxd_id=275402)

- REMEMBER** ■ There are always rules and laws that US citizens must follow and obey.
- Voting is not mandatory; it is a privilege of citizenship.
  - Voice your opinion; your vote counts;
  - Remember to vote on November 6th.
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### **Poll Watchers Program**

Poll watching on Election Day has been a basic activity of the LWV for many years. After several years' absence, LWV of McLean County is going to have a program this fall. It is a small time commitment for a very important governmental activity.

Here's what you need to do:

1. Send me an email (phylvs49@gmail.com) that you are interested in poll watching and how long you are able to work on Election Day (November 6).  
We would like at least a two-hour shift from everyone.
2. Attend a 90-minute training session, either Saturday, October 13 at 9:00 a.m. at the Normal Public Library or on Thursday, October 25 at 7:00 p.m. at the Government Center.
3. You must complete the training in order to receive credentials that will allow you to be a poll watcher.

You can email me with questions - Please inform your friends and neighbors of this program.  
You do NOT need to be a League member to take part.

Thanks for your help. -- Phylis

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### **2013 State Convention Report**

#### ***Save the Dates! --- June 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013***

League of Women Voters of Illinois State Convention will be held in Normal at the Marriott Hotel and Carol Reitan Conference Center.

State and local committees are in the planning stages and will soon be asking for volunteers. There will be many opportunities for people to become involved in League in different ways.

Watch future Voters for more information.

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### **League of Women Voters of McLean County** **OBSERVERS**

Thanks to all who have volunteered to cover observation of local governing board meetings.

We are still in need of volunteers to cover:

McLean County Board meeting ▪ 3rd Tuesday of the month at 9:00 a.m.  
Normal Human Relations Commission ▪ 3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:15 p.m.

Contact Camille Taylor at 310-9852 or email [taylorcr54@yahoo.com](mailto:taylorcr54@yahoo.com) if you would be willing to fulfill this vital role for our organization.

*It's one of the easiest, but most important jobs you'll ever have!*

## Labor Day Parade

Members of our McLean County League participated in this year's Labor Day Parade!

Several dressed as Suffragettes, to remind us of those who helped win women's right to vote.

Enjoying the beautiful day and activities are (left to right):

Laurie Bergner,  
Rose Marsaglia,  
Gretchen Monti,  
Joni Painter, and  
Mary Zeller.



## 2012 Election Information . . .

- ▶ **Early Voting** – October 22<sup>nd</sup> to November 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ▶ **Close of Registration**– October 9<sup>th</sup>
- ▶ **Grace Period** – For those who did not register to vote or change their address before the close of registration, will take place from October 10<sup>th</sup> to November 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- ▶ **General Election** – November 6<sup>th</sup>
- ▶ **Disabled Absentee Ballot** – The City of Bloomington Board of Election Commissioners has a disabled absentee ballot for what they term 'permanently disabled' people. No documentation is required to be considered 'permanently disabled'. Applications may be obtained from this office and voters will automatically be notified for 5 years thereafter – 115 E. Washington St. Room 403 – P.O. Box 2400, Blm, IL 61702. Email [becvote@becvote.org](mailto:becvote@becvote.org) for more information or call (309) 888-5136. Since implementing this service, the number of voters in this category increased from 200 to 450.

### ***Of potential interest to Leaguers...***

The Green Sanctuary Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church, 1613 E. Emerson, Bloomington, will be hosting a documentary and discussion on fracking in McLean County. Scheduled for Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the church, the event will begin with a showing of the Emmy award winning documentary, **Split Estate**. The 60 minute film will be followed by open discussion.

For more information, contact Nancy Armstrong - [narmstr908@aol.com](mailto:narmstr908@aol.com).

**Ballot Referenda**  
**In the upcoming election,  
referenda items will be on various ballots throughout the county...  
following is information regarding  
League position on several of those issues.**

**League of Women Voters of McLean County Position on  
Recorder of Deeds Referendum**

The League of Women Voters has had a position favoring the appointment of the separately elected McLean County officials (recorder, auditor, coroner, etc) since the early 1970s. This position was reviewed and restated in 1999 and 2005. The reasons for this position will be outlined below.

This position leads us to recommend a “no” vote on the question which will be on the November 6 ballot, when voters will be asked to approve or disapprove combining the McLean County Recorder of Deeds duties under the McLean County Clerk.

Because the League does not believe the McLean County Clerk should be an elected position, we cannot support an increase and enhancement in the power, responsibilities, activities and duties of the clerk’s office.

If the ballot question were to make the elected Recorder of Deed’s office an appointed/hired office, the League would enthusiastically support such a ballot question.

**1) ONLY POLICY MAKERS SHOULD BE ELECTED.**

First and foremost, the League believes we should elect policy makers and not elect those with merely administrative functions such as the County Clerk or Recorder of Deeds. Only those who set policy (such as the County Board) should be elected. Except for gross malfeasance, the elected officials, such as the clerk are only held accountable for performance every four years at the election. The League does not want to enhance this office by adding the recorder’s duties to the clerk’s when the elections are the only time the officials are held accountable.

**2) NO ONE EVALUATES OR HAS OVERSIGHT OVER ELECTED OFFICIALS.**

When there is an election for an elected official, such as the County Clerk, the voters have very little way of evaluating the candidates on their policies because all their duties and responsibilities are totally set by state statute. No one is evaluating their performance. The County Board has no authority to even add to an elected official’s duties.

Another reason voters are very likely to have difficulty in determining if the elected official is doing an adequate job is that the elected position’s responsibilities are not often visible to the general public. The responsibilities do affect day-to-day operation of county government and the position should be accountable to the policy makers through the office of county administration.. Even if a candidate says that he/she would “streamline the office”, this is still administrative. Only those officials with direct contact with the workings of an office are in a position to know. Even if they discover a deficiency, they may not be able to do much about it. Employees are in a difficult position when it comes to criticizing their boss.

Our county administration does evaluations of the various county appointed officials such as the building & zoning director and the nursing home administrator. No one suggests that these several appointed offices be made elected. An appointed/hired official could lose his/her job due to poor performance just as in private business and this has been the case in the past. There is no guarantee this will happen through the elective process. Also in our county's past, certain poorly performing elected officials have continued to be reelected in what has amounted to a popularity contest. No one is really reviewing the job performance of these elected officials. These officials are financially supported by the County Board but the board has no ability to hold these offices accountable.

### **3) MINIMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE.**

The only requirements for the county elected officials, such as the clerk, are that the person be at least 18 years of age, a registered voter and a resident of the county. The League does not favor enhancing the duties of an office with those minimal requirements. If the recorder were instead made an appointive/hired office, the county administration and county board could set the job description, credentials, job skills and qualifications for the office and hire someone accordingly.

### **4) SPENDING TIME RUNNING FOR REELECTION**

The elected officials, including the county clerk, must divert much of his/her energy and time to running for reelection every four years. This may mean even less time to supervise the office, including the duties of the recorder. This is yet another reason to oppose enhancing the clerk's office by adding the recorder's duties to it. An appointed/hired recorder would answer to the professional county administrator instead of standing for reelection and could be replaced at any time if his/her work is unsatisfactory.

### **5) NO REQUIREMENTS FOR HOURS ON THE JOB**

There are no requirements as to how many hours an elected official must spend on the job. He/she may go to the office the same hours as appointed/hired officials or he/she may not come in with any regularity. In at least one case in years past, an elected official rarely went in to the office. A elected office holder could even hold an outside job. Such a poor system should not be enhanced by adding the recorder's duties to the clerk's office. An appointed recorder would be required to work certain hours by the county administrator/county board and his/her work time would be accounted for on payroll records along with sick time and vacation time.

### **6) STREAMLINING COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

If the recorder were appointed, it would allow greater accountability, thereby taking one step toward streamlining county government. County government is known as "the invisible government", with its multitude of elected officials, in addition to its appointed department heads.

## History of the League of Women Voters of McLean County's Position on McLean County Government

...Submitted by Sally Rudolph

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the League of Women Voters of McLean County engaged in a study of McLean County government. I remember Alice Ebel was a member of the committee. She was then chair of the Political Science department at ISU and was a member of the then McLean County Board of Supervisors. Carol Reitan, who would later be elected Mayor of Normal, was a member of the committee. My involvement on this League committee led to my subsequent election to the McLean County Board. In 1970, our League reached consensus that the separately elected offices in McLean County, i.e. recorder, auditor, coroner, etc., should be made appointive offices, as allowed by the 1970 Illinois Constitution.

On November 2, 1976, three referenda were on the ballot in McLean County. The three separate questions submitted to the voters asked that the auditor, recorder of deeds and the coroner be designated appointed offices to be filled by appointment of the McLean County Board. Our League supported "yes" votes on these questions but they were rejected by the voters.

Our League continued its position regarding the appointment (hiring) of the separately elected officials.

In 1999, our League again formed a county government study committee. This time I recall that Carol Reitan, Sandy Scott and others were on the committee. I participated as well. The purpose of the study was to determine if our county government position remained relevant and also to specifically study the county auditor position. The question of making the auditor an appointed/hired position was to appear on the March 21, 2000 ballot. The McLean County Board, on December 21, 1999 voted to put the question on the ballot by a vote of 13-5.

Our League held a meeting on December 1, 1999 at the Normal Library. The study committee reported on their interviews with various officials, including then County Administrator John Zeunik.

It was determined that our county government position remained relevant. We also decided to support a "yes" vote to change the auditor from an elected to an appointed office.

The McLean County Farm Bureau joined us in our position and we did some joint advertising promoting a "yes" vote, including a large ad in the Pantagraph, which appeared March 19, 2000. We also ran ads on WJBC radio. The Farm Bureau ran a large article in its newsletter, the "Messenger" in February 2000 strongly urging a "yes" vote.

I authored an op-ed in support of a "yes" vote which appeared in the Pantagraph on March 5, 2000. The con side was written by the then president of the Illinois Association of County Auditors.

A group formed to urge a "no" vote. They called themselves the "Concerned Taxpayers of McLean County". They ran a Pantagraph ad on March 19, 2000 and also sent a postcard mailing to voters. This group later said they had spent \$7500 to keep this post elective. Their treasurer was quoted in the Pantagraph as saying they were made up of mostly members of the Illinois State Auditors Association.

Numerous League members, Farm Bureau members and others wrote Letters to the Pantagraph Editor in support of a "yes" vote. The "no" voters were also represented in the Letters.

The tally was: Yes Letters: 23 No Letters: 9

The Pantagraph heartily endorsed a "yes" vote on March 6, 2000. Ultimately, the "no" votes prevailed. The tally was 17,988 "no" votes and 9,209 "yes" votes.

In 2005, the League once again reviewed its position on McLean County Government and adopted the position, which says in part: The League supports the appointment of all administrative personnel and the election of all policymakers.

## Electricity Aggregation Referenda

The referenda regarding electricity aggregation refer to -  
the Town of Normal, the Randolph Township, and the Village of Heyworth.

A sample is this one, for the Town of Normal:

**"Shall the Town of Normal have the authority to arrange for the supply of electricity for its residential and small commercial retail customers who have not opted out of such program?"**

This referendum would allow these local governments to combine with other groups to negotiate lower electricity rates for their communities. The ability to combine with other large groups, using collective bargaining, enables them to negotiate lower rates. If for any reason someone would prefer to opt out of the negotiated rate, they can do so for free during the first month, and a small \$25 after that at any time. Normal's city manager, Mark Peterson, has noted that any agreement made would include an opt-out clause for the Town in case the non-negotiated rate should fall below the negotiated rate during the contracted period.

The Town of Normal was one of only 5 out of about 250 Illinois communities that did not pass this referendum when it was first on the ballot last spring. All these other communities, including those of Peoria, Lincoln and Champaign, passed the referenda last spring, following a new law that allowed for local governments to negotiate rates for residential and businesses, and all are receiving substantial decreases in their electricity rates.

**The League of Women Voters supports this referendum under the League's principle:**

Responsible government should -

"promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest,  
share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare,  
promote a sound economy."

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## **League of Women Voters of Illinois Opposes**

### **HJRCA 49 - The Constitutional Amendment Referendum**

After reviewing the General Assembly's proposal, relevant League positions and precedents, and researching supporting documentation, League of Women Voters of Illinois Board of Directors has decided to **oppose** HJRCA 49, the Constitutional Amendment referendum proposal that will be on the November 6, 2012 ballot.

#### **The Amendment Proposal**

The measure would amend the General Provisions Article of the Illinois Constitution requiring a three-fifths majority vote of each chamber of the General Assembly, or the governing body of a unit of local government, school district, or pension or retirement system, in order to increase a benefit under any public pension or retirement system.

The full text is available here:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=&SessionId=84&GA=97&DocTypeId=HJRCA&DocNum=49&GAID=11&LegID=67098&SpecSess=&Session=>



## **Rationale for Opposition**

Our objection is squarely focused on the proposal's 3/5 majority vote requirement, *not* on pension reform issues. We are acting under our Representative Government position to *Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.*

The Illinois League has a strong record supporting measures to make our democracy more, not less, representative. Our interest in and experience with constitutional amendments are extensive, including detailed study and active participation in the 1970 Constitutional Convention where we strenuously advocated for simple majority votes on constitutional matters.

As an organization that has been active in the legislative process, we have witnessed first hand what the Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure confirms:

*Some people mistakenly assume that the higher the vote required to take an action, the greater the protection of the members. Instead the opposite is true. Whenever a vote of more than a majority is required to take action, control is taken from the majority and given to a minority.*

The Illinois Constitution is not the place for a provision that is this specific to a single issue and to one remedy for a larger problem. If the legislature determines this needs to be done, a statute which can be modified more easily is the appropriate course to take.

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## **MEMBERSHIP EVENT AND SOCIAL**

League of Women Voters of McLean County celebrated the beginning of our program and membership year on Tuesday, September 11, at the Moses Montefiore Temple.

Lane Crothers, Professor of Politics and Government at ISU, was our guest speaker. He presented a very entertaining and informational program on the upcoming presidential election -

"Who Said Money and Looks Don't Matter? Romney v. Obama, 2012".



The Florence Fifer Bohrer Award, named after the founder of the McLean County League, was given to Mike Matejka for his outstanding and ongoing service to the community.

Mike's areas of civic engagement have included human rights, participating in government, working to help low income individuals, and working for labor, which he believes helps keep people out of poverty.

Pictured to the right is Phylis VerSteegh, co-president of our League, who is presenting Mike with this award.

Over 80 people enjoyed visiting, sharing friendships and meeting new people. We were thrilled to get many renewing memberships and also welcome several new members.

# League of Women Voters of McLean County

## Membership Year begins October 1

To join or renew, please mail this form and your check,  
payable to LWV McLean County, to:

**Becky Hines**  
**517 Kreitzer Avenue**  
**Bloomington, IL 61701**

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### ***League Membership Form***

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Year joined League \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Individual Dues \$60

2<sup>nd</sup> Member of Household \$30

Full Time Student Dues \$30

### ***Optional Membership Level (includes dues)***

Supporting: \$60-74

Sustaining: \$75-99

Advocate: \$100+