



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF McLEAN COUNTY

Co-Presidents

Phylis VerSteegh
309-664-5357
info@lwvmclean.org

Maureen O'Keefe
309-258-4233
info@lwvmclean.org

Membership

Becky Hines
309-828-6140
membership@lwvmclean.org

Treasurer

Linda Stockton
309-663-5244
treasurer@lwvmclean.org

Bulletin

Charlette Elm
309-664-5857
bulletin@lwvmclean.org

League of Women Voters
of McLean County
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Official address of League of Women Voters:

1918 Owens Drive
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-663-5166

Web sites of League of Women Voters:

McLean County
www.lwvmclean.org

State of Illinois
www.lwvil.org

National
www.lwv.org

The Voter

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LWV 2013 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Judicial Activism and the Roberts Court

Wednesday • April 3rd • 7:00 pm • ISU Bone Student Center
Speaker - **Geoffrey Stone**

Distinguished University of Chicago Law Professor and former Provost Stone writes for the Huffington Post and has had articles in the Chicago Tribune, as well as authoring several books. We are delighted to be able to have Stone back again to speak on this timely topic, about which he has just completed a book. This is particularly relevant given the crucial issues in front of the court, which include voting rights, affirmative action and gay marriage.

• The program is free and open to the public •

LWV of McLean County Annual Dinner & Auction

Thursday • April 11th • 5:30 pm
Holiday Inn Hotel • 3202 E. Empire • Bloomington

• More information on page 3 •

Hidden McLean County

Veterans in our Community - Issues and Experiences

Tuesday • April 23rd • 7:00 pm • Normal Public Library
(Rescheduled from February 26th due to cancellation caused by weather conditions)

While we hear about issues with veterans returning from stints in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have heard little about our own community. Yet, there are many veterans who are living, working, going to college here.

- How has their experience been returning from war?
- What has it been like to seek employment, go back to school after being at war, sit in university classrooms with undergraduates?
- What kind of services does our community offer them?
- Do they get help with school, jobs, benefits?

This program will feature -

Jeanette Kavanaugh

Heartland Community College Student Veteran's Club Advisor

Mick Mills

Retired Illinois Department of Employment Security,
Veterans Employment Representative

Two veterans of recent wars: **John McKirgan** and **Alan Burton**

• The program is free and open to the public •

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

Happy Spring (I think). One minute the weather is beautiful and warm and I'm sure spring is here. The next minute the ground is white again. In order to live happily in central Illinois, you must believe the statement: "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes and it will change".

LWV McLean is – as always – busy getting ready for spring with local elections, the annual dinner and our annual meeting. And this year we are also getting ready for the state convention here in June. You will find information about all of these events elsewhere in this Voter. Please refer to the last issue of the Voter for detailed information about the annual meeting. We will also be poll watching again at the April election. Let us know if you can help with this activity.

We have several very interesting programs in the next month – one with local interest and presenters and one with a national speaker. Our annual dinner speakers also promise to be very interesting. These programs certainly do help to educate citizens on political matters that are so important to everyone. I hope you will be able to join us for these great events.

And we will soon begin soliciting help with the state convention. There is a League job for everyone – no matter what your interests or how much available time you have.

Thanks for your help in making LWV McLean one of the most vital League units in Illinois!

...Phylis

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

This month our members have continued to --

- Register new voters for the April election;
- Conduct candidate forums;
- Interview local legislators;
- Contact, local, state and national legislators on important proposed laws and changes;
- Advocate for local, state and national political issues that affect all citizens!

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Our website is www.lwvmclean.org. And "like" us on Facebook.

... UPCOMING FORUMS and ELECTION ...

Normal Town Council and Mayor • Wednesday • March 20th • 5:30 pm
ISU Bone Student Center • Brown Auditorium • Co-sponsors: LWV, ISU, HCC

...

Bloomington City Council • Thursday • March 21st • 7:00 pm
Electricity Aggregation presentation at 6:30 pm
Mount Pisgah Church • 801 W. Market St. • Bloomington • Sponsor: LWV

...

Bloomington Mayor • Thursday • March 28th • 7:00 pm
Illinois Wesleyan University • Hansen Student Center • Sponsor: IWU

...

Heartland Community College Board of Trustees • Monday • April 1st • 7:00 pm
Normal Public Library • Co-sponsors: LWV, HCC

...

General Election for City Offices in Bloomington-Normal
Tuesday • April 9th

McLean County League of Women Voters' Annual Dinner and Auction

Thursday • April 11th • 5:30 pm

Holiday Inn and Suites Hotel • 3202 E. Empire • Bloomington (across from the airport)

We're calling on League members for help in supporting this year's Annual Dinner and Silent Auction which is just around the corner. We're very excited about our program this year which features speakers from the Illinois Innocence Project @ Illinois Springfield, who will deliver an excellent program of interest to League members and the general public alike.

John Hanlon, Legal Director of the Illinois Innocence Project, and

Dr. Gwen Jordan, Professor, in the Legal Studies Program at University of Illinois Springfield

They will discuss the mission, what they do to accomplish their goals and the focus of the Project -

“To evaluate and investigate cases for credible claims of an inmate’s actual innocence, and when appropriate, provide legal representation and/or other assistance toward proving the inmate’s actual innocence”.

Festivities begin at 5:30. Socializing, bidding on Silent Auction items, and enjoying a buffet of sumptuous hors-d'oeuvres catered by Baxter's American Grille start the evening off followed by the Illinois Innocence Project speakers at 7:00.

In order to make the Annual Dinner a successful fund-raising event for our League, we're requesting donations from League members. In the past, Leaguers have donated their services (master gardening, spring cleaning, home repairs) and their talents (crafts, art work, photography, quilting, special recipes etc.). Some members have donated items from their businesses (e.g., six months supply of fresh eggs, antiques, or gift certificates). Tickets you have but are unable to use such as the Heartland Theater or the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts are also very popular.

We'd greatly appreciate any items you wish to donate to the Silent Auction and rest assured, the proceeds will be put to good use in supporting our League's many educational programs and community services, such as our successful Court Observer program.

If you have items to donate to make this year's Annual Dinner and Silent Auction a success, please contact: Maureen O'Keefe: (309) 258-4233, 501 Centennial Avenue, Normal, IL 61761 or via email at mokbg@comcast.net

Maureen will make arrangements to pick up donations as necessary.

Tickets are \$40.00 and available to purchase from any LWV Board Member - or by mailing the reservation form in the Voter - or online at www.lwvmclean.org
Deadline for purchasing tickets is April 4th.

You won't want to miss this year's Annual Dinner...hope to see you there!

SAVE THE DATES...

League of Women Voters of McLean County Annual Meeting

Tuesday • May 21st • 7:00 pm • McLean County Government Center

• • •

League of Women Voters of Illinois 2013 STATE CONVENTION

Please make sure that June 7, 8, and 9, 2013, are on your calendars for the Illinois League of Women Voters state convention which will be held at the Carol Reitan Conference Center in Normal.

LWV McLean is the host League so we will need lots of volunteers for many different jobs. Most jobs will require a very short time commitment so please be ready to help us out when our local committee soon begins to call members. The convention promises to be fun and interesting.

Observer Corps

The Observers continue to attend meetings and have been contributing some interesting reports. If you are interested in getting involved, we could still use observers for the following:

- **Airport Authority** - Second Thursday of the month at 4:30 pm
- **Justice Committee of the McLean County Board** - First Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm

Please contact: Camille Taylor at taylorcr54@yahoo.com or (309) 310-9852.

Observer's Report: **Bloomington Human Relations Commission**

Unit of government observed: Bloomington Human Relations Commission

Time and place of meetings: Second Wednesday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at City Hall.

Official members: Chair: Tony Jones, Vice-Chair: Cathy Ahart,
Members: Jon Elliot, Donya Wills-Flohr, Rhonda Smith, and Radha Gulati,
City Staff: Ernestine Jackson and Emily Bell

Manner Officials are selected: Members of the commission are appointed by the mayor. The official membership of the commission is a cross-section of the community including males, females, different races, ethnicities, and cultures.

The pace of the meeting was appropriate as they discussed a situation that was presented to them by a member of the community. The commission followed the typical meeting agenda and observed the rules for a quorum, etc.

The commission appeared to use information received from a complaint that had been filed with the commission which was based on police involvement and had a police report and other data to support the complaint.

There was no media present and the audience consisted of me, a League of Women Voters observer, and the person who had filed a complaint.

The commission listened to a lady who had filed a complaint that appeared to be racial profiling and what she construed as an unethical practice by the police. She was pulled over after the policeman ran a random license check as she drove in her west-side Bloomington neighborhood. An outstanding ticket appeared which resulted in getting her car towed. As the policeman took her home, he told her if she gave him information about what goes on in the neighborhood, he may be able to get the fines she received reduced. She went to the Department of Motor Vehicles to clear up the ticket situation and when she went to court, she told them what happened. Her ticket was not removed, she had to pay the fines, but she shared what the policeman said to the judge and to the interim chief of police. The chief of police said this was a common practice for "certain neighborhoods" and that perhaps the policeman could have used a different "approach."

The board decided to invite the interim Chief of Police and the Pantagraph to the next meeting to discuss the situation and to make sure the Pantagraph was aware of these practices. I believe a face to face meeting will help clarify the concerns and give all involved a fair chance to resolve the issues.

The Human Relations Commission attempts to resolve issues within the community using mediation and reconciliation. It also investigates complaints of discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, and financing. The testimony/case I witnessed appears to be more of a community issue, specifically to the west-side of our community.

---Submitted by Camille Taylor

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

The Normal Town Council consists of the Mayor and six Council members. The elections are nonpartisan and there are no wards. Three Council positions are contested in each election, each voter can vote for three candidates, and the three with the most votes are elected. Mayor Chris Koos and Council members Cheryl Gaines and Adam Nielsen were reelected in April 2009 for four-year terms. Also reelected in 2009 was Jason Chambers, who resigned last August to take the job of McLean County State's Attorney. His replacement, Kevin McCarthy was appointed by Mayor Koos, with confirmation by the Council. Council members Jeff Fritzen, Sonja Reece, and Chuck Scott were reelected in 2011.

In the upcoming April 9th election, challengers Victor Connor and JeVaughn Martin are running against incumbent Mayor Koos. Nielsen is not running for re-election, but incumbents Gaines and McCarthy are running against Gary Ohler, Scott Preston, Jarrod Rackauskas, and Ron Ulmer for three council positions.

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.

Meetings are held in an upscale room on the fourth floor of the new Transportation Center in uptown Normal. (Even if you are not interested in Normal politics you might want to attend just to check out the art in the council chamber and elsewhere in the building.) 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 town website does not mention it, the video is shown at 6 p.m. Tuesday and 10 a.m. Saturday following the 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. Often these media have information that you do not get just by attending Council meetings.

A typical audience is 20-40 people, including Town of Normal staff, ISU students assigned to attend, and Town of Normal citizens. Among the "regulars" are candidates challenging incumbents in the April election. 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. [Here clicking on "email" gets you a blank email addressed to Mark Peterson and Deputy City Manager Pamela Reece, mpeterson@normal.org and 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.

The Town Council scored a major victory in December with the approval of new construction to commence this spring across the street from where the Council meets. For five years there has been a huge eyesore there, a big hole where construction began but never really got off the ground. The new \$32 million project includes an eight-story Hyatt Place Hotel, upscale apartments, and a restaurant. The \$32 million includes \$5.5 million cash from the developers, \$19.2 million private financing, and a \$7.35 million bond from the town, to be paid off from tax revenue such as the sales tax and food and beverage taxes. The town is providing 113 parking deck spaces while charging just \$1 for the land, including the foundation laid five years ago.

The Town of Normal pays \$56,000 for an on-site wellness coordinator (from Advocate BroMenn) to work with town employees. There has been some discussion on the Council about the need for this position, but it turns out that with healthier employees, costs for the town's self-insured employee medical program have declined since the position was created. These savings have been passed on to employees through an occasional month premium holiday. Thus, employees have experienced improved health and cheaper medical insurance with the help of the wellness coordinator.

---Submitted by Ken Berk and Jana Edge

*Observer's Report: **Bloomington City Council***

The agenda items of importance for this meeting include:

- Seating a temporary councilman for Ward 1 to replace Bernie Anderson;
- Managed Competition, a process of comparing city departments and private contractors to determine who should provide the City services.

Prior to this meeting Mayor Steve Stockton appointed Jamie Mathy to fill Bernie Anderson's vacancy due to Bernie's resignation caused by health issues.

Opposition to this appointment came when Judy Stearns (Ward4) and Steven Purcell (Ward 7) stated that they felt Mathy is given an unfair advantage in the next election by this appointment. They stated that someone not running for the Ward 1 seat should be appointed, not a candidate.

Jim Fruin, (Ward 9) suggested that the seat remain vacant since the next election is in a few months. Mayor Stockton said the law requires an appointment before that.

In a 7-2 vote the Council approved Mathy for the duration of Anderson's seat, and he was sworn-in. At the next election, Mathy will be a write-in candidate against Kevin Lower.

On April 22 the Council will reconsider a policy of managed competition. This will be the last meeting for the current council, because the April 9th election winners will be seated in May. David Sage (Ward 2) Judy Stearns, Jennifer McDade (Ward 5), and Karen Schmidt (Ward 6) voted against the reconsideration date because it is a complicated matter. The measure had been tabled earlier because of policy language and possible employees morale issues. The measure received a 5-4 approval vote.

---Submitted by Marlene Gregor