



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF McLEAN COUNTY

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The Voter

of McLean County

Vol. 80 No. 4

December 2013

Save the Date: LWV Programs 2013-14

Our State's Attorney Office: The Most Powerful Player in the Legal System?

Tuesday, November 19, 7:00 p.m.

- Normal Public Library Community Room
- How does the justice system really work?
- Current and former County State's Attorneys join Public Defender and criminal defense lawyer on informative panel
- See page 3

Holiday Wine Tasting & Fundraiser



Tuesday, December 3, 5:00-7:30 p.m.

- McLean County Arts Center, Bloomington
- Enjoy fine wine and delectable hors d'oeuvres from A. Renée
- ★ ▪ Join friends for a fun night out and support your local League
- Purchase tickets from Board, committee members, or email dd.willi@hotmail.com
- See page 6



Drinks & Dialogue: Women in Media – Exposing the *Miss Representation*

Tuesday, December 10, 5:00-6:30 p.m.

- Ozark House, 704 McGregor, Bloomington
- Discussion continues about the way women are represented by mass media in America.
- See page 3

From the Desk of Our Co-Presidents

This issue of the *Voter* is intended to highlight some key state initiatives the League is supporting as we head into 2014: Legislative Redistricting and the Graduated Rate Income Tax.

The League of Women Voters has a clear position on legislative redistricting and we are supporting the *Yes for Independent Maps* effort to place the Illinois Independent Redistricting Amendment on the November 2014 ballot. The proposed amendment to the Illinois Constitution would change Article IV of the Illinois Constitution, the Legislative Article, which determines the way General Assembly districts are drawn after the US Census.

“The Illinois Independent Redistricting Amendment is an important reform essential to bringing transparency, non-partisanship and independence to the redistricting process and ending incumbent protection and voter disenfranchisement,” said Mary Kubasak, LWV Illinois president. “We are excited to work with the *Yes for Independent Maps* campaign to help secure the signatures to get this on the 2014 ballot.”

We are making petitions for this constitutional amendment available at all McLean County LWV events and we are encouraging our membership to sign and circulate these petitions. We also invite you to participate more fully by joining efforts with local League members who are already actively working on this project (see “How Can You Help?” on page 4 of this issue).

Our League also supports a second proposed change to the Illinois State Constitution, a constitutional amendment on a fair tax allowing for higher rates on higher incomes and lower rates on lower incomes which replaces the flat tax now imposed in Illinois.

We support the amendment calling for a graduated rate income tax because we believe it will bring fairness to Illinois’ tax code, helping all Illinois families by protecting key priorities such as education, public safety, health care and human services. Mary Kubasak, again, President, LWVIL, notes, “These vital services have been significantly shortchanged in recent years because of Illinois’ systemic budget problems; the result of an out-of-date tax code which overburdens middle income families.”

We urge you to support this effort as well. League members will be circulating petitions urging our local law-makers to support pending legislation (HJRCA33/SJRCA 40) on this matter. If adopted by the General Assembly, this referendum would ask Illinois voters if they want to amend the 1970 Illinois Constitution which currently states the personal income tax must be non-graduated (flat).

As members of the McLean County League of Women Voters, let’s do our part to support citizen participation in government by supporting these two critical state-wide initiatives.

And finally, on behalf of the Board of the McLean County League of Women Voters, we extend warm holiday greetings to all of you! Please enjoy your holiday season!

--Maureen and Kathy, Co-Presidents

Programs A-Plenty

The Most Powerful Player in the Legal System? – November 19



Come to the **Normal Public Library Community Room on Tuesday, November 19th, at 7:00 p.m.** for our November program: **Our State's Attorney Office: The Most Powerful**

Player in the Legal System? Our experienced panel will include:

- State's Attorney Jason Chambers
- Former State's Attorney and judge Ron Dozier
- Public Defender Kim Campbell
- Local criminal defense attorney Jeff Brown

The McLean County State's Attorney is one of our most important elected offices, yet it is not well understood by most voters. Just how does the State's Attorney's office fit into our overall justice system? What parts of its actions are defined by law, and how much discretion does it have? What are the priorities regarding how the State's Attorney prosecutes different kinds of crime? How does plea bargaining work, and how does it affect our system of justice? How does the office work with the Public Defender's office?

Join us and find out how justice really works.

Women in Media – Drinks and Dialogue – December 10

Please join us on **Tuesday, December 10th from 5:00-6:30pm at Ozark House Restaurant** as Drinks and Dialogues keeps the conversation going on *Miss Representation*, a documentary that exposes how mainstream media contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America.

League members had the chance to view this documentary at the Normal Theater in October but if you didn't see it, the article below had a great recap and a short 5 minute video:

<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/11/miss-representation-documentary-turns-lens-on-medias-negative-treatment-of-women/>



Seeking Facilitators!

Are you passionate about a particular topic? Would you like to initiate a conversation with a group of like-minded friends? Please contact Lacey MacLeod to learn more about being a facilitator for Drinks

and Dialogues: lacey.marie06@gmail.com .

- 5:00 Casual Conversation
- 5:30 Discussion Begins

2014 Dates and topics coming soon.

Wine Tasting & Social Fundraiser – December 3



Usher in the Holiday Season – at the 3rd Annual League of Women Voters of McLean County Wine Tasting and Social Fundraiser.

Where and when? It's all happening at the McLean County Arts Center on Tuesday, December 3rd, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. Bring your friends and join us as we taste some fine wines and delicious hors d'oeuvres catered by A Renée. And as a special extra - you'll have time to shop the McLean Arts Center's Holiday Treasures.

Tickets are available from any League Board member or online at dd.willi@hotmail.com (still just \$30). You won't want to miss it!

Make your reservation now! Reservation deadline: Dec. 1, 2013

Redistricting – How Can You Help?

Our League is actively working with *Yes for Independent Maps* to gather signatures to put a constitutional amendment on the November 2014 ballot that will take redistricting out of the hands of politicians and put it in much better ones by returning power to the people of Illinois.

Without this amendment, politicians will continue to rig the system by drawing boundaries designed to control who will be elected. Over 70% of Illinois voters support the type of independent redistricting commission this amendment calls for, with 38% strongly favoring this measure.

So how can you help this become a reality? First, if you haven't already signed a petition, please do so! Petitions are available at all League events, or you can contact any Board member and we'll get you a petition to sign! Here are some other things you can do:

1) Become a “concealed carry” circulator!

With the holidays coming up, we'll have many opportunities to visit our families and friends. And as Pat Landes of the Peoria LWV says, she routinely practices “concealed carry” relative to signature-gathering by keeping her petitions close at hand at all times. We're finding this measure is an easy sell with most people, so please consider taking petitions to your holiday gatherings!

Many of you are members of all types of organizations, formal and informal – whether it's a monthly Book Club or something more formal which you can influence. Perhaps your organization would be willing to let you circulate petitions at regular events either formally or informally. If your organization would like a speaker, we can accommodate that as well.

2) Circulate petitions around town!

Some of you may have contacts at local business, retirement communities, or rural area events where you might circulate petitions. If you do and feel like this is a way to help, we can get you petitions to circulate. (See Logistics Box on page 5, or contact any League Officer on the side bar on page 1 of the *Voter* for more information.)

Or are you active in activities around town? There are many activities which draw large

crowds of fellow citizens that make great venues for collecting signatures. Here are some suggestions for the next couple of months:

NOVEMBER

- ISU Basketball games
- IWU Basketball games
- High School sporting events
- **Festival of Trees** (November 21-24th at the Interstate Center)

DECEMBER

- ISU Basketball games
- IWU Basketball games
- High School sporting events
- **Jaycee's Christmas Parade:** December 7th at 10:00 a.m. Consider collecting signatures while everyone is waiting for the parade to begin.

3) Write a Letter to the Editor!

Let your views be known by writing a Letter to the Editor. While one person's perspective may or may not be persuasive, multiple voices could have a very positive impact! Let us know if your letter gets published!

What suggestions do you have for collecting signatures? Let us know and we'll publish them in the next edition of the *Voter*. You can contact any Board Member on the front of the *Voter* with your suggestions: Co-Presidents Maureen O'Keefe and Kathy Tosh; Membership Director - Becky Hines; Treasurer – Emily Vigneri; or Susan Alford – *Voter* Editor; and we'll publish them in the next edition of the *Voter*.

Currently, *Yes for Independent Maps* is counting on grassroots efforts to build enthusiasm and momentum in reaching the goal of 300,000 valid petitions by April 1, 2014. We encourage all Leaguers to participate in this effort.

The Voter is taking a break

for the holidays. Our next issue is planned for the week of January 20th. I wish everyone a healthy and happy season.

--Susan Alford

Procedures for Picking Up/ Dropping Off Signed Redistricting Petitions:

Petitions can be picked up or dropped off from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. at the U.S. Bank (on the corner of Eastland Drive and Veteran's Parkway) in the 2nd floor Conference Room. This service is available on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of every month through March.

Dates are:

November 23, 2013	February 8, 2014
December 14, 2013	February 22, 2014
December 28, 2013	March 8, 2014
January 11, 2014	March 22, 2014
January 25, 2014	

Instructions for Petition Signers:

1. *Signers* must be registered to vote in the State of Illinois.

2. *Signers* MAY sign petition, and sign a petition for a political party (e.g., signing a petition for a Republican or Democratic candidate office AND signing this petition is perfectly acceptable).
3. Petition *signers* SHOULD sign their names as listed on their voter's registration card. For example, "William E. Jones" not "Bill Jones."
4. Petition *signers* should Sign and Not Print their names, unless that is the way they signed their voter's registration card.
5. DO NOT use ditto (" ") marks for any part of an address.

Contact Illinoisredistrict@gmail.com or call Glen Ludwig, at 309 585-1273, for information or support.

From the LWV-IL website:

Frequently Asked Questions about Tax Reform:

The League of Women Voters of Illinois has compiled the following information regarding the need for a Graduated Rate Income Tax:

1. **Why should we trust other legislators with more of our money?** While Illinois, like many other states, does have some waste, fraud, and abuse, the state is very efficient in the way it manages and spends its income tax revenue. Waste in Illinois mainly describes the huge amounts Illinois spends paying interest on its debts. Illinois spends more than 90% of its discretionary General Fund budget on the four core services of education, healthcare, human services and public safety. Therefore, increasing the state's tax revenue will be incredibly beneficial to the residents of Illinois.

Source: *Center for Tax and Budget Accountability Analysis*

2. **If we raise the flat tax enough, won't it cover Illinois' needs? How much would we have to raise a flat tax for it to do so?** Raising the flat tax would raise additional revenue for Illinois but it would not be the fair way to tax. Raising the flat tax would only create more income inequality in the state since it is not based on an individual's ability to pay. Middle income taxpayers would still pay a larger percentage of their income in taxes than upper income earners.

Source: *Center for Tax and Budget Accountability Analysis*

3. **Isn't a flat tax fairer?** A flat tax is in fact not fairer. When all taxes are combined (including sales tax, property, etc.) middle income earners are paying relatively much more of their salaries in taxes than upper income earners. Since it does not correspond to an individual's ability to pay, a flat tax puts more burden on low and middle income families.

Source: *Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy*

4. **Won't more taxes drive business out of Illinois and won't wealthy people either leave the state or buy property in low tax states as tax shelters to avoid paying more?** Some people may leave or create tax shelters. However, extensive research on tax avoidance indicates that higher income taxes do not play a large part in an individual's decision to leave a state. In fact, income tax isn't even a factor for a great majority of families who move. Other factors such as family, climate, job relocation, and housing play more of a role. As for business, corporate taxes play a very small part in their overall decision. When it comes to building robust, resilient and prosperous economies, more fundamental factors than taxes--like human capital, entrepreneurship, availability of transportation, condition of the infrastructure, and innovation--come into play.

Source: *Young and Varner (2011)*

Like LWV, IEA Supports GRIT

Brady Backs Ballot

Regions 14 and 62 of the Illinois Education Association (IEA) held their annual Legislative Dinner on October 30, 2013, at the Ozark House. Region 14 includes local teacher and education support personnel unions from Bloomington and Normal. Region 62 includes these same groups from Cornell, El Paso-Gridley, Fieldcrest, Flanagan, Heyworth, Leroy, Lexington, Lowpoint-Washburn, Olympia, Pontiac, Prairie Central, Ridgeview, Roanoke-Benson, Saunemin, Tri-Valley, and Woodland. Due to redistricting, these broad areas include Senators Jason Barickman, Darrin LaHood, Chapin Rose, and Bill Brady. Representatives include Josh Harms, Dan Brady, Daniel Leitch, Bill Mitchell, Keith Sommer, and Rich Brauer. All were invited; however Representative Dan Brady is the only one who attended. Senator Jason Barickman had an illness in the family and Representative Bill Mitchell was ill. The others either did not respond or sent their regrets.

The purpose of the annual dinner is to meet and dialogue with our legislators as well as get updates on issues that impact educators. It is also intended to motivate the members to get politically active.

Although the pension issue has been the main focus for several years, this year the main topic

was the Graduated Rate Income Tax (GRIT). The IEA is a partner with the statewide coalition, "A Better Illinois."

Like the LWV, IEA is part of the effort to gather 500,000 signatures on a petition to give to the legislature during the spring General Assembly. The goal is to convince the legislators to put this issue of a progressive tax structure on the November 2014 ballot and let the people decide. A short video was developed by the Region 14 Uniserv Director, Ben Matthews. The video does a great job by using people from different income brackets to describe how GRIT would impact them.

After Representative Brady viewed the video, he spoke to the group of about 75 educators and gave his views on a variety of topics. Brady said his responsibilities as a legislator are to public safety, public transportation, and public education. When asked about GRIT, he not only feels it should be placed on the ballot to let voters decide, he also said he could support this issue with some tweaking from the numbers he viewed in the presentation. The audience was pleasantly surprised to hear this, and our intention will be to continue to work not only with Representative Brady, but with all of our legislators to seek support.

--Camille Taylor

Did you know....?

 McLean County is highlighted in the newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Illinois for its successful membership growth! Check out the [Nov. 2013 E-News](#) and other information at their website, <http://www.lwvill.org/>.

League Partners With Heartland College

Helping Students Learn About the US Democratic Process

Several classes at Heartland Community College offer English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to adult students in the Bloomington/ Normal area. The teachers offer a wide range of instruction, and one of their units is on the US Democratic Process.

Last year, Phylis VerSteegh and Camille Taylor developed a PowerPoint presentation specifically for these classes at the request of League member, Carol Baker, who has been working with the ESL program at Heartland for several years. Carol took the opportunity to use the League's arm of education to make a good connection with a unique population who can value from learning about this important part of our democracy. Among the many objectives are voting requirements, names of legislative leaders at the local, state, and national level (and how to contact them), and encouraging participation in the community.

This year the presentations were during the day of October 16th and the evening of the 23rd. Multiple classes joined together in one room, and the students were very receptive. They asked questions about the government shutdown (which was occurring at that time) and about our local legislators. Some made verbal commitments to contact legislators and/ or attend local meetings such as the Heartland Board meeting or a school board meeting, as several had children in our local schools. Although many did not meet the citizenship requirement to vote, some were on the path to citizenship, and a couple had already attained citizenship.

It was a very rewarding experience to share the issue of voting with this type of audience since it is one of the freedoms we have in our country. I hope to continue to visit these classes each year!

--Camille Taylor

Normal City Council Mirrors League Goals

Observer's Report: November 4, 2013

Much of the time as a League Observer we see parliamentary procedure being followed and the work of the city being done – but sometimes there is a treasured nugget that might easily be overlooked. At the November 4, 2013 meeting I observed the goals of the League in living color: informed citizen participation and influence through education and advocacy.

There was a presentation on the Juvenile Justice Council Summer Jobs Program by Cathy Waltz, Program chair, and Alicia Lenard from Youthbuild. Lenard gave an excellent report mentioning all of the businesses of B/N that had provided job shadowing and internships for program participants. Sixty-five percent of the participants are now employed, with only 2 % recidivism. Eleven received scholarships for the future, and all developed portfolios.

During the report, two neatly-dressed young men sat expressionless at the microphone. Lenard worked to engage them in telling their stories, and the Mayor and Council's attentiveness and smiles warmed the moment. The young men's shoulders relaxed as they spoke. They said the experience was life changing. One said that when he told his grandmother that he was coming to the council meeting, she was

"shocked." His friends said, "You only go there when you're in trouble." The other said, "This place is different than I thought." They explained that through the Jobs Program they learned the importance of learning to work together and the importance of leadership skills, and how they have already used these skills at school this year.

Talking to the Council was an important event for them, but it would not have happened without the warmth and attentiveness of the city officials. Each council member spoke to each young man individually, focusing on what they had learned during the experience, encouraging them to try new things, to become informed about school government, and also the importance of understanding local government: "Who knows... maybe one day you will be sitting here." The dialogue was concluded with the Council issuing an invitation to come back again anytime or to contact them individually if they could be of help.

As the young men left the speaker's table, Mayor Koos told them that they would be on TV the following day and then their family and friends could see them too!

--Jana Edge

Relax and unwind at a
★ Fun ~ Fundraiser



**WINE
TASTING
& Social**

Tuesday, December 3rd ♦ 5:00-7:30 p.m.

McLean County Arts Center

601 N. East Street, Bloomington

Catered by

A. Renée Wine Café

- ♦ Gift Basket Raffle ♦ 'Holiday Treasures' Art Show
- ♦ Purchase wine by the glass
- ♦ Enjoyable shopping for art and wine lovers

Tickets - \$30



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF McLEAN COUNTY**

Deadline for reservations is December 1st
For reservations and information email dd.willi@hotmail.com