



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF McLEAN COUNTY

In this Issue:

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| President's Letter | p. 2 |
| Our League in Action | p. 2 |
| Programs | p. 3 |
| Mental Health Consensus | p. 4 |
| Donations Needed | p. 5 |
| Leaguers Got GRIT | p. 6 |
| Redistricting Effort | p. 6 |

The Voter, newsletter of the League of Women Voters of McLean County, is published 8 times a year

Official address of the League of Women Voters:
1918 Owens Drive
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-663-5166

Websites of League of Women Voters:
McLean County www.lwvmclean.org
State of Illinois www.lwvil.org
National www.lwv.org

President

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

Vice President

Kathy Nicholson-Tosh
309-530-2050
info@lwvmclean.org

Membership

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

Treasurer

Emily Vigneri
309-532-6932
treasurer@lwvmclean.org

Newsletter

Susan Alford
309-829-1472
bulletin@lwvmclean.org

The Voter

of McLean County

Vol. 80 No. 7

April 2014

Save the Date: LWV Programs 2014

Consensus Meeting: Mental Health Study Tuesday, March 25, 6:30 p.m.

- Osborn Room, Bloomington Police Department
305 S. East Street, Bloomington
- Extra parking in the Bloomington Library lot across the street
- See article on page 4

Annual Dinner & Silent Auction Fundraiser Wednesday, April 16, 5:30 p.m.

- Holiday Inn & Suites, 3202 E. Empire St., Bloomington
- Guest Speaker – Illinois Chief Justice Rita Garman
- Meet, eat, and support League advocacy
- See pages 3 & 7

Annual Membership Meeting Tuesday, May 27, 2014

- Get ready for next year's busy season
- See "From the Desk of Our President" on page 2

Get Out and Vote: Tuesday March 18 Polls open 6:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

"Elections belong to the people. It is their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters."

-Abraham Lincoln

From the Desk of Our President

It's hard to believe we're already close to winding up another year in League. Right now we're in the midst of finishing up several committee assignments in preparation for our Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 27th. Diana Hauman led the work of the Nominating Committee; Julie Prandi's committee examined changes needed to our by-laws; Charlette Elm led the Program Committee; and Linda Stockton took the lead on our Budget Committee. All of their findings & recommendations will be included in next month's *Voter* to prepare you for the Annual Membership Meeting.

I'm thrilled to report our membership has increased this year; we are currently at 134 members, an increase of 17 new members. We're very proud that we are one of the largest and most active Leagues in Central Illinois. For those of you who may be newer to League, you'll find that the League of Women Voters is actively engaged in advocating and educating citizens around a wide array of issues on both a local and state-wide basis. Issues we're looking into include: climate change, campaign finance reform, criminal justice, election laws, fiscal policy, redistricting of state legislative districts, graduated rate income tax, and school funding.

Our League addresses these issues through its studies, monthly programs, and new this year, our informal Drinks and Dialogue forum we hold almost every month. So we're very happy you've joined us and we'll gladly welcome your energy and ideas in keeping the McLean County League of Women Voters effective in responding to the issues and needs we see right here in our own backyard and beyond.

A good example of our "League in Action" is the Mental Health Study Sally Rudolph has led throughout this year. Twenty-five Leaguers and citizens actively participated in this study, and they're eager to share their findings at our March 25th Consensus Meeting. We'll be starting at 6:30 p.m. in the Osborn Room at the Bloomington Police Department. All members are urged to attend this important League Meeting. This meeting is also open to the public.

And finally, we're extremely excited about this year's Annual Dinner and Silent Auction because we're welcoming Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Rita Garman who will talk to us about recent decisions and initiatives being taken up by the Court. Please plan to attend and bring a friend!

~Maureen O'Keefe

Our League in Action

-  League welcomed Illinois Superintendent of Schools Chris Koch who gave an informative talk about "Education Strengths, Issues, and Challenges" on February 18.
-  Phylis VerSteegh and Maureen O'Keefe were interviewed by Mike McCurdy on WGLT's *Sound Ideas* and discussed the pros and cons of the proposed "modified ward system" in Bloomington.
-  Three League members have submitted proposals for new studies to be considered for 2014-2015.
-  Voter Services Directors JE Myers and Jim Keeran ran a well-attended Sheriff's Forum on March 3, moderated by Willis Kern of WGLT. Special thanks to JE for serving as our League's host for this event.
-  The League's Mental Health Study was completed in March. The study committee interviewed a wide range of local agencies, counselors, educators, officials, and citizens to arrive at recommendations to improve mental health services within McLean County.

2014 Annual Dinner

Join the Fun at Our April Program

On April 16, 2014 the League of Women Voters of McLean County will hold their Annual Dinner. This year, we are excited and honored to have Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Rita Garman as our speaker.

In her talk, "Illinois Supreme Court: Recent Decisions and Initiatives," Justice Garman will discuss some of the cases that the Illinois Supreme Court has adjudicated recently, as well as some of the projects that it has directed. This talk will give us an opportunity to better understand how our Illinois Supreme Court works, some of its priorities, and important recent cases.

Doors open at 5:30 for socializing, bidding on Silent Auction items and enjoying a buffet catered by Baxter's American Grille. Around 6:45 p.m. Chief Justice Rita Garman will speak.

It's all happening at The Holiday Inn and Suites, 3202 E. Empire, Bloomington (across from the airport). Tickets are \$45.00 and can be purchased from any board member. Also, reservations may be obtained by calling Dianne Williamson at 309-662-6129 or emailing her at dd.willi@hotmail.com. Deadline for reservations is April 12th.

--D. Williamson & L. Bergner

Learn More!

Read Roy Strom's article about Rita B. Garman in *Chicago Lawyer*, "[Destination: Chief Justice](http://chicagolawyer.com/Archives/2013/12/Person-of-the-Year-Rita-Garman.aspx)" <http://chicagolawyer.com/Archives/2013/12/Person-of-the-Year-Rita-Garman.aspx>

Get Signatures & Get In Free!

Petition Contest for Ticket to Annual Dinner

- Contact Glen Ludwig and tell him you want to enter the Redistricting Contest!
- Collect the most signatures on Redistricting petitions and receive a complimentary ticket to our Annual Dinner
- Get petitions counted & notarized! See p. 8 for details and contact Glen Ludwig at 309-858-1273 or glen@creativeagsolutions.com

Drinks & Dialogue

Several people met at A. Renée on February 25, 2014, to discuss the impact of the Supreme Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act on people of color and the poor. The Supreme Court overturned a section of the Act which required states that had a history of unlawful voting practices to get a "pre-clearance" from the Department of Justice before they tried to change any of their voting policies.

Almost immediately after the Supreme Court overturned this area, several states like Ohio and Texas rushed to change their laws. Some required a state issued ID to vote, others shortened the time for early voting by a week or so, and some eliminated same day registration/voting and/or provisional ballots.

Elderly people in poverty are the most likely to have difficulty in getting a state issued ID. So to make this a requirement puts a hardship on this population. Requirements to get a state issued ID can include providing proof of birth, which some people do not have. Although some states advertise a "free" state ID, there is a fee to get a copy of a birth certificate or baptismal record before you can get the ID.

People who work second and third shifts have difficulty voting during the regular times, so early voting helped meet their needs. Cutting back on the number of days to do this will greatly affect the number of people able to utilize this opportunity. The ability to register and then vote immediately greatly increased the turnout in the last presidential election. Eliminating this opportunity will have a huge impact as well.

Legislation is being introduced in Congress to address the impact of the Supreme Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act. A bi-partisan group is collecting co-sponsors to try to get legislation passed this year. In the meantime, the Justice department is trying to get an injunction against the states who have rushed to change their voting policies. If the department is successful, no changes would occur before the November election.

--Camille Taylor

Consensus Meeting – March 25

McLean County Mental Health Study Presents Findings

The League is having a consensus meeting to report the results of our mental health study and to discuss the consensus questions. This will be the culmination of our important study on mental health in McLean County. It will be held on Tuesday, March 25, at 6:30 p.m. in the Osborn room at the Bloomington Police Department behind City Hall. Extra parking is available in the Bloomington Library lot across the street.

The meeting will hear a detailed report from the League Mental Health Study Committee, as well as a brief history of mental health services in the U.S. This will be followed by the consensus part of our meeting. The consensus statements are as follows:

- 1) League supports funding which is effective for mental health services in McLean County.
- 2) League supports planning and coordination of mental health services in McLean County.
- 3) League supports a comprehensive array of services to meet the mental health needs of McLean County.
- 4) League supports the development of and support for a pro-active core leadership for mental health services in McLean County.



- 5) League supports “cradle to grave” mental health services for all citizens of McLean County.

Subsequently, alternate statements were suggested by our membership:

- 1) League supports funding which is effective to meet needs for a comprehensive array of mental health services in McLean County.
- 2) League supports planning, coordination, and a pro-active core leadership for mental health services in McLean County.
- 3) League supports “cradle to grave” mental health services for all citizens of McLean County

Our study involved 25 members and includes information from 45 interviews with more than 40 sources! It is the largest and most comprehensive study we have done in years and has the potential to be very influential in our community. It is important that as many League members as possible attend to get educated and to participate in working to achieve a consensus. We hope to see you all there!

--Sally Rudolph, chair

Thanks to Committee Team Members

Sally Rudolph, chair

Anne Nadakavukaren*

J. Myers

Judy Buchanan

Maureen Sollars

Jan Hood*

Carol Reitan

Dianne Williamson

Phylis VerSteegh*

Valerie Parker

Seena Bhende

Judie Bey*

Victoria Harris

Laurie Bergner

Mary Anne Schierman

Julie Sullivan*

Mary Riddle

Judy Poultney

Debi Brownstone

Martha Everman*

Karen Major

Donna Nickels

Ex officio:

Jason Chambers

Barbara Stuart

Patti Fitzgerald

*Denotes team leader

Mental Health Study Interviews Conducted In the Fall of 2013 and Early 2014

1. McLean County Government
2. National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
3. The Baby Fold
4. DCFS
5. Mid-Central Community Action
6. OSF Resource Link
7. McLean County Health Department
8. Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership
9. Chestnut Health
10. Collaborative Solutions
11. ABC Counseling
12. Juvenile Detention Center
13. Normal Township
14. Regional Alternative School
15. Regional Office of Education
16. Path
17. Advocate Behavioral Healthcare Health Unit
18. United Way
19. Center for Human Services
20. Salvation Army Safe Harbor
21. Bloomington Housing Authority
22. City of Bloomington Township
23. Recovery Court
24. Project Oz
25. MarcFirst
26. Mental Health Task Force
27. YWCA
28. Home Sweet Home Mission
29. Mental Health America
30. McLean County Court Services
31. East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging
32. Center for Youth & Family Solutions
33. Labyrinth
34. Two practicing local psychiatrists
35. Some clients with "Lived Experience"
36. McLean County Jail
37. A practicing local psychologist
38. Local Churches— involvement in counseling
39. A Pantagraph reporter
40. Two local educators (counselors)

Silent Auction Donations Needed

Share Your Talents & Treasures

As always, the League welcomes any donations of items you'd like to contribute to our yearly fund-raising effort, the Annual Dinner and Silent Auction we'll be holding on April 16. Last year we received many beautiful crafts and works of art from multiple League members. So maybe you're an artist yourself or you have a hobby that you can "show off" this year (woodworking, jewelry making, photography, knitting/ crocheting/ quilting, etc.) We'd love to feature your artwork or crafts at the Silent Auction.

In addition, your "non-transportable" talents are welcome as well! Leaguers have been generous in donating their skills by volunteering services such as gardening, coaching, teaching, handyman talents, etc. So please let us hear from you again this year.

Monies raised from the Silent Auction allow us to fund our ongoing educational and advocacy programs, for example, as well as speaker fees, printing of voter guides, fees associated with meeting spaces, etc. We need to raise funds because we only charge in dues what we pay in dues on a per member basis to the U.S. and Illinois League of Women Voters. Thus, to ensure we don't need to raise our own dues, we engage in fundraising activities.

Please contact Dianne Williamson (dwill2@comcast.net, 309-62-6129) or Kathy Tosh (kn.tosh@comcast.net, 309-827-8550) concerning your donation. We thank you in advance for your generosity in supporting the Annual Dinner/ Silent Auction Fundraiser.

Leaguers Show True GRIT

The snow did not daunt two League members, Alexis Kalish and Camille Taylor, when they made their way to the monthly meeting of the Kiwanis on February 17, at the Doubletree Hotel. The presentation they used was created with the assistance of another Coalition member, the Illinois Education Association. Leaguer and Kiwanis member Becky Hines made it possible for them to address the meeting. After the 25-minute presentation, there was a short time for questions and answers.

The League is one of more than 250 members of "A Better Illinois" coalition. The coalition's goal is to collect 500,000 signatures throughout the state to put the GRIT referendum on the November ballot. If adopted by the General Assembly, it would amend the 1970 Illinois Constitution. The current five percent flat tax will expire on January 1, 2015. The challenge before the legislature is whether to extend the current flat tax or replace it with "something else."

The League of Women Voters has supported a graduated rate income tax since the 1970 Constitutional Convention. A "Speakers Bureau" of local League members has been trained and hopes to make presentations to as many groups as possible.

The graduated rate income tax is a fair way to tax income by placing a higher rate on higher incomes and lower rates on lower incomes. The League of Women Voters supports this plan, rather than the regressive flat tax now imposed in Illinois. The pending legislation, (HJRCA 33/ SJRCA 40) embodies another important principle: citizen participation. Passing this amendment will provide Illinois voters the chance to play a role in this process.

--Camille Taylor

Redistricting Report

Many are asking how we are doing with signature collection, especially with the local petition contest (see "Get Signatures & Get in Free" on page 3). Our county is very near 5000 signatures and we need to be over 6000 by April 15. **If 50% of the LWV members do one petition each, we will have 1000 names!**

There has been significant progress in fundraising for this campaign. The latest report logs \$638,500 for the week of March 4-11. It brings the total raised by Yes for Independent Maps to \$1.2 million since Jan. 1. Consequently more staff has been hired and new offices have been opened.

If you are just getting started with signature collection, the easy place to start is to ask family, friends, and neighbors. Veteran circulators have found it is an "easy sell" as most people are aware of the gerrymandering issue and are ready to sign.

Petitions can be dropped off and notarized, or new ones picked up, in the US Bank Community room on Saturday, March 22, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. The bank is on the corner of Veterans Parkway and Eastland Drive. Or you can email Jan Hood or Glen Ludwig for a petition at the following email address: illinoisredistrict@gmail.com. Or call Jan at 309-275-2087, Glen at 309-585-1273.

Voter apathy is a problem for the State of Illinois. Only 15% of Illinois citizens think Springfield is doing good job but 97% of them get re-elected. We all need to step up to the plate and get this redistricting measure on the ballot for 2014. This will help make Illinois government more transparent, fair, honest, and accountable. It's time to draw fair maps and put voters back in charge.

--Jan Hood

Enjoy this Nix Gerrymandering video from Independent Maps and share it with your friends:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhtKkZd9Oag>

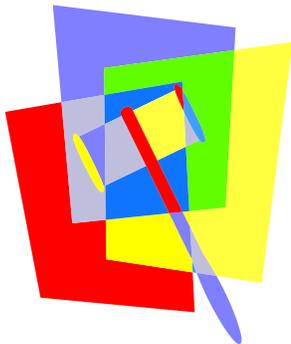


THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF McLEAN COUNTY

ANNUAL DINNER & Silent Auction

Wednesday, April 16, 2014 ♦ 5:30 p.m.
Holiday Inn & Suites
3202 E. Empire, Bloomington

Buffet by



Baxter's American Grille

Guest Speaker – Rita Garman
Chief Justice, IL Supreme Court

Tickets - \$45

Deadline for reservations – April 12

For reservations & information email dd.willi@hotmail.com

Go to www.lwvmclean.org



The McLean County League of Women Voters® Announces Let's Nix Gerrymandering Contest

March will be our **final push** to collect signatures on the “Yes to Independent Maps” petitions we’ve been circulating to change the Illinois State Constitution & establish an independent process for drawing legislative maps. We’d like to see the Redistricting Amendment placed on the November 2014 ballot to ensure Illinois voters have an opportunity to weigh in on this critical Amendment.

How You Can Help!

Enter our contest and gather as many signatures as possible in March!

- **Prize:** The individual who collects the most signatures will be awarded a **free ticket** to the McLean County LWV Annual Dinner on April 16. Rita Garman, Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court is our featured speaker. Contact Glen Ludwig 309-585-1273 or glen@creativeagsolutions.com to participate in the signature contest.

Logistics:

- **To obtain petitions** to circulate, contact Glen Ludwig by email at glen@creativeagsolutions.com or phone 309-585-1273.
- **Petitions must be notarized!** Drop Off dates & location to get petitions notarized: US Bank, corner of Veteran’s & Eastland Drive, on just two more Saturdays: March 22, and April 5 from 9:00 -11:00 AM in 2nd floor conference room.
- **Where to Circulate?** Up to you, but several venues have been planned in March for gathering signatures. To help out and find out more, contact Glen Ludwig.

**Let’s do our part to make Illinois government
more fair, transparent and accountable!**