



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

OF McLEAN COUNTY

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The Voter

Of McLean County

Vol. 82 No. 1

September 2015

Save the Date:

League 95th Anniversary Celebration

Tuesday, September 15, 5:30 p.m.

- Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal, 1613 E. Emerson St., Bloomington
- Celebrate the past and plan for the future with old and new friends

Observer Team Kick-Off

Thursday, September 17, 5:30 p.m.

- Breckenridge HOA Club House
Stried & White Eagle Drive, Bloomington
- Contact Glen Ludwig, glen@creativeagsolutions.com

Voter Registrar Training

Friday, September 18, 2:00 p.m.

- Bloomington Election Commission
115 E. Washington, 4th floor
- See page 3 to RSVP

Justice for All: A Defense Attorney's Perspective

Tuesday, September 29, 7:00 p.m.

- Normal Public Library Community Room
- Panelists: Public Defender Carla Barnes, Asst. Public Defender Jennifer Patten, Defense Attorney Stephanie Wong

Drinks & Dialogue: Observers on Local Government

Wednesday, October 14, 5:30 p.m.

- A René Wine Café, 306 N. Center St., Bloomington
- Discussion of how local governments work – or don't work

New Member Orientation

Thursday, October 15, 5:30 p.m.

- 5 White Place, Bloomington
- Membership Chair Joe Gibson and others explain some of the ins and outs of the League

From Our President:

Greetings!

This message follows a very rich retreat with your League of Women Voters of McLean County board. So many great ideas for moving forward were generated and discussed! They include plans for completing our studies, offering community education and candidate forums, providing opportunities for voter registration, and partnering with a variety of organizations and associations! We welcomed three new Board members, Olemuel Ashford (Treasurer) and Teri Liston (Voter Services co-chair) and Phylis VerSteegh who returns to the Board as co-chair of Voter Services. We have a great deal ahead of us and look forward to active participation of our entire membership during the coming year.

September Activities

Please look at the calendar for the month of September. You will find it full. We will be walking in the Labor Day Parade on September 7th – please join us if you would like. Our study on effective and efficient local government begins on September 10th and will be led by our very own Sally Rudolph and Glen Ludwig. At last count, 26 members and friends have volunteered to participate on this study team.

We hope all of you will be attending our September 15th celebration of the 95th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters. We will be honoring past presidents and sharing some of our successes of the past year as well as plans for the future. The Florence Fifer-Bohrer Award recipient will also be announced during this celebration. Please RSVP to Joe Gibson, our membership director, at 309-530-7561 or jgibson5whitepl@comcast.net

As you look further, our Voter Services co-chairs, Phylis VerSteegh and Teri Liston, will be busy arranging and providing voter registration opportunities. Also, training for poll-watchers will be provided prior to the September 10th election for the 18th congressional district so all those trained can use their new skills on election day. Voter registrar training will also be occurring in September. Please contact one of our co-chairs if you would like to participate in this training.

Glen Ludwig will kick off the observer team activity for the year. This is a critical role the League plays and is an extremely interesting effort and opportunity for involvement. Glen has organized this to provide great value through feedback to the individual Boards and Councils that are regularly observed.

Finally, we have our first community education event for the year on September 29th. Please join us to meet and hear from our new public defender, Carla Barnes. Laurie Bergner and Camille Taylor are coordinating more learning and discussion opportunities through regular educational meetings and Drinks and Dialogue. We hope you are able to join us for some of these.

In closing, this month brought sadness to our League members and friends with the loss of Juliana Sullivan, a former League president and great friend to many. We all have memories of Julie and her special impact on each of our lives as a close friend, teacher, colleague, mentor, etc. For me, Julie was an amazing model of organization and detail. She educated – not only students in the classroom, but also those of us who were interested in and attempting to learn about the League and League processes. With that, we are naming the first scholarship the League has supported at Heartland Community College, The Juliana Sullivan LWVMC Memorial Scholarship. We all thank you, Julie, for your example.

We, the Board and I, look forward to meeting you all!

Kathy

Programs for Fall 2015

Educational Events

We are pleased to confirm the following programs for the fall. They will be held in the Community Room of the Normal Public Library, 206 W. College Ave., at 7:00 p.m.

Sept. 29: Justice for All: A Defense Attorney's Perspective

The League is pleased to round out our programs on our legal system by focusing on defense issues, including how the public defender's office works with the legal system, and defense issues they contend with.

How do defense attorneys work with the State's Attorney's Office? What are the tools at their disposal as they work with clients and with the courts? What are the issues they find challenging, interesting, or frustrating? Scheduled panelists are Public Defender Carla Barnes, Assistant Public Defender Jennifer Patten, and Defense Attorney Stephanie Wong.

Come hear this fascinating look at the defense side of our legal system.

Oct. 20: Affordable Housing Issues in McLean County: Program and Consensus Meeting

Speakers Laura Furlong, CEO of Marcfirst and Karen Major, Director of Programs, Baby Fold, will present the Housing Study's findings. League members will participate in a Consensus Vote.

Nov. 17: Politics and Money in Illinois. Sarah Brune, Illinois Campaign for Political Reform.

Laurie Bergner

Drinks and Dialogue



Drinks and Dialogue is back with more informative and interesting topics for the new League year!

We will continue to meet at A. Renée Wine Café, 306 N. Center St. in downtown

Bloomington beginning with a 5:30 p.m. social hour (Wednesday is \$5 wine) and discussion at 6:00 p.m. An article will be provided prior to the evening to help structure the conversation on the evening's topic.

Here's our schedule for 2015-16:

October 14 - Glen Ludwig and the Observers Team will share what's going on with our local governing bodies such as the Bloomington City Council, McLean County Board, etc.

December 9 - Judy Buchanan from the Mental Health Committee will give an update on what's happening with mental health reforms proposed in our county.

February 10 - To be determined (suggestions are welcome!)

April 20 - To be determined (suggestions are welcome!)

We hope you will **SAVE THESE DATES** and join us for what is always a stimulating and lively evening of discussion!

Camille Taylor and Becky Hines

Voter Services

Remember to vote on Thursday, September 10 if you are in the 18th Congressional District. Candidates are Robert Mellon and Darin LaHood.

We will need voter registrars to help people register to vote in the primary election on March 15, 2016. Training will be held at the Bloomington Election Commission (115 E. Washington, 4th floor) on Friday, September 18 at 2:00 p.m. It will take approximately one hour. **Please notify Teri Liston (terill55@hotmail.com) by September 14 if you are available.**

Primary elections will require lots of voter services! Please let us know if you are willing to help with **candidate forums, online voters' guides, pollwatching, voter registration or any of the other many jobs that will be required before March 15.** Watch for further information each month. And thanks for your help!

Teri Liston and Phylis VerSteegh

Study to Look at Efficiency of McLean County Governments

Our next League Study, addressing the critical and elusive topic of “government effectiveness and efficiency,” is set to begin on September 10. The first meeting will be an organizational session, during which we will explore and discuss the scope and process that will be used to gather and manage information.

Our plan is to limit this study to many, but not all McLean County Governments. Sally Rudolph, who is the major driving force behind this effort, has been diligently working on determining how many governing bodies we have in McLean County. In a recent email from Sally, she said, “I think we should agree that we will not have a totally accurate count because of the various ways we could count local governments. I think we should just throw up our hands and say we have ‘about 200’ local governments and not get bogged down in search for a perfect count.”

One might wonder how over the years we managed to create 200+ governments in a county with 170,000 population. That adds up to one governing body for each 850 persons. Based on that people-government ratio, the City of Chicago would have 3200 governing bodies. (Unfortunately they likely do.)

Government bodies, in both number and size, seem to grow as fast as the grass did this summer.

The study focus is to identify potential action ideas as to how and where government leaders might look to deliver effective government while maximizing efficiency. The end result being government doing the right things while maximizing the efficiency of delivery. Of course a highly efficient government would require less tax dollars.

Locally many of the early governing territories were linked to the establishment of Townships. In the early

settlement days, surveyors riding horses across the Illinois prairie defined township boundaries. Those invisible lines remain much the same today. Typical central Illinois



Townships are 6 miles square or 23,000 acres. Mclean County has 30 townships and each township has its own government. West Township, in the SE portion of the county,

takes the prize for the smallest township population (216) as reported in the 2010 census. The West Township hall is located in unincorporated Sabina.

Over the years, it has been much easier to form a new governing body than it is to close one down. That’s one reason for Illinois having the dubious distinction for having more governments than any other state.

The goal of our League Study is not to close down governing units. Our purpose is to support and encourage **more effective and efficient government**. In rural areas, often citizen focus is “how can we preserve and keep our local government” not on “how we might make our government more efficient.”

Our Study Team, which currently numbers over 20, plans to identify efficiency opportunities via many interviews of community leaders. The ideas included in the study report will likely result in more community conversation linked to structuring our governments to maximize both effective and efficient government. The path to accomplishing this is still a little foggy, but during the next 18 months we intend to find milestones marking the road to better government efficiency.

People who want to join the journey should contact Sally Rudolph, lsrudo@comcast.net.

Glen Ludwig

Summary of the Meeting of the Membership: June 29, 2015

- The League will be involved in redistricting again this year.
- The LWV-IL approved the New York Concurrence, which addresses consolidation of government units.
- Dues for the primary member were increased to \$65.
- LWV-McLean County will join the Upper Mississippi River Inter League Organization, which will advocate for natural resource issues affecting the region.
- Jim Keeran presented our League with the ACLU’s “Champions of Liberty Award.”

Alexis Kalish, Secretary

National Study Opportunities

The LWVUS is sponsoring two national studies this year, one on Constitutional Amendments and another on Money in Politics. Since we are a member-driven organization, positions are created based on local Leagues across the country studying the issue, presenting the information to their local Leagues, and then reaching consensus (sense of the group) on a series of prepared questions. All of these responses will determine the LWVUS position for action and advocacy on these issues.

1) Constitutional Amendments Study

The LWVUS boils this down to: *what are the shared values and beliefs within the League—what consensus do we have—regarding the circumstances that might allow or compel the League to endorse a constitutional amendment or an Article V Convention?*

2) Money in Politics Study

This study will update the League's position on campaign finance for the purpose of addressing the lack of member understanding and agreement as to whether financing a

political campaign is protected speech under the First Amendment and will consider a) *the rights of individuals and organizations, under the First Amendment, to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of campaign activities*, and b) *how those rights, if any should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current position*.

If our League participates in these studies, your time commitment will begin in September and will end in January. Here's what your involvement might encompass. Your study group would read and discuss the materials (pro and con) supplied by LWVUS. Your committee might choose to invite a guest speaker to address the League in order to amplify some of the issues involved in the study. Your group would choose the study questions you feel our League should respond to and then hold a consensus meeting on all or some of the prepared questions.

If you have any interest in participating in either of these two study groups, please contact Maureen O'Keefe at mokbg@comcast.net by September 15, 2015.

Maureen O'Keefe

Mental Health Study and Action Committee Update on Community Mental Health

Mental Health Action Plan

The McLean County Board's recently released Mental Health Action Plan includes immediate and long-range action steps to strengthen community-based services. The plan cites the importance of a community dialogue on the topic of mental health.

The Mental Health Action Plan will build on the many innovative and evidence-based practices being implemented across the country to improve the delivery of mental health services both within and outside the justice system. It will engage a varied group of "experts" on these issues, including: state and federal agencies; mental health and substance-use treatment providers; law enforcement; judicial and court officers; and people with mental illnesses and their families.

A County Board Health Committee has already begun to meet, and a Behavioral Health Coordinating Council will be named to include key stakeholders from business, industry, healthcare, behavioral care, funders and others. The McLean County Mental Health Action Plan-2015 can be found on the County's website.

County Public Building Commission

The LWV recently provided testimony before the County Public Building Commission. The County is currently

working with the Commission on a project to restructure the County's leases to include two new projects, the expansion of the County Detention Center and the Federally Qualified Health Center. Both will provide for program expansion and needed improvements to local behavioral health services. The League urged the County to take advantage of this timely, reasonable funding option. (The previous edition of the *Voter* included an article on the origin and role of the Public Building Commission).

McLean County Detention Center

The County has commissioned the services of an outside firm to review the proposals for construction of the jail expansion; this is a customary procedure given the projected cost of the project. Following their report, the county is expected to take action on one of the multi-million dollar proposals.

Local Sales Tax

Both the Town of Normal and the City of Bloomington are expected to address the increase of the local sales tax. There are several possible recipients being discussed, including local mental health.

Judy Buchannan

People You Should Know

Sullivan Memorial Scholarship Awarded

The League of Women Voters of McLean County has established a \$500 scholarship in honor of longtime community activist Juliana Sullivan, a past president of the League, who remained active in our organization until her death in July.

The Sullivan Memorial Scholarship will be awarded annually to a deserving Heartland student who expresses an interest in learning more about government and politics. Award winners will be mentored by League members and will be given an opportunity to attend board meetings and work with League members on programs.



The first recipient of the award is Mallory Carroll, 17, a freshman at Heartland Community College in Normal.

Mallory grew up in Hartsburg, Illinois, north of Lincoln in Logan County. She is the fourth youngest in a family that includes her three sisters and one brother. She was home-schooled by her mother, and will be the first among her siblings to graduate from college.

In addition to taking a full load of courses at Heartland, Mallory works 40 hours a week as a team leader at the Culver's in Lincoln to pay for her education. She has been working at a variety of jobs since the age of 15, and has volunteered as a teacher's assistant at Little Lambs Day Care and with the Human Society of Logan County.

Mallory has not yet declared a major at Heartland, but says she is interested in becoming a certified day care teacher or pursuing a career in financial management. She has taken one course in government, which she says she enjoyed greatly, and follows news of the upcoming presidential election mostly on social media.

She says that while she benefited from her home school experience, she felt ready to attend a public college where she hopes to "meet new people, make new friends, and grow as a person."

Mallory is also active in her church, Faith Assembly of God in Lincoln. She likes to sing and often leads the music worship. She enjoys being in the outdoors and drawing sketches. She says she looks forward to learning more about issues facing our state and county through her association with the League.

Judith Valente Reynard

New Board Members

Teri Liston

Teri Liston's journey to the LWVMC underscores yet again the importance of inviting friends to League events.

Teri's first encounter with the League came when a close friend invited her to the annual meeting last year. It was there she heard about the League's Observer Team, whose members monitor and report on local government meetings. "It sounded like something that could help me learn about local government," Teri said. She soon joined the League and volunteered to be an Observer. Now she is a new board member, overseeing the critical League responsibility of **Voter Services**.



Teri grew up in Mattoon, IL and attended Illinois State University. She says she enjoyed the community and decided to remain here after graduating. She worked for 38 years at State Farm Insurance. Most of that time was spent as an analyst in the Systems Department.

Now retired, Teri says she has more free time to spend with her daughter, son-in-law, and two grandsons living in El Paso, IL. "The biggest pleasure in my life is being a part of their lives," she says. When she isn't involved in League activities, Teri enjoys cooking and trying new recipes on unsuspecting friends. "Sometimes that's a positive for them, sometimes not!" she jokes.

As an Observer, Teri attends meetings of the McLean County Board and its committees. The meticulous notes she provides on those meetings fulfill an important service in keeping voters informed about their elected county government.

Olemuel Ashford



Olemuel Ashford joins the board as its new **Treasurer**, succeeding Emily Vigneri, who is now President-elect. Olemuel brings a wealth of knowledge of computer systems to the League board. He has worked as a systems analyst at State Farm Insurance for 21 years. Olemuel also comes with a welcome "can-do" attitude. He

recently rewired a portion of his home in Bloomington and put in a new plumbing system, using only books and You Tube videos as guides!

Olemuel was inspired to join the League after reading about last year's study on the future of water in our

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New Board Members from p. 6 --

county, "I was very interested in following that because I did not know much about our water system other than what are our primary sources of water," he says. Olemuel wasn't able to join the team studying our water supply and quality, but says he did want to be part of an organization that not only keeps informed about important local issues but is dedicated to informing the voting public as well.

Olemuel grew up in Grambling, LA and graduated from Grambling State University. He moved to McLean County because of his employment with State Farm. He enjoys playing tennis and sand volleyball as well as cooking and baking. A six-word memoir he wrote summarizes his approach to life: "Live, learn, teach and iterate better." "By iterate better I mean, keep the cycle going of learning and teaching," he says, "but with constant improvement."

The League is fortunate to have Olemuel and our two other new board members who are so generously willing to serve.

Phylis VerSteegh

Another addition to the League board is a familiar face and someone whose many contributions over the years make her not only part of our institutional memory, but someone whose presence forms the very heartbeat of our organization.



Phylis VerSteegh has been an active League member for nearly a dozen years. She led us ably as both a co-president and president until just a few years ago. Phylis also served as Membership Chair for several years. She returns to the board once again, this time as co-chair of **Voter Services** with Teri Liston. She calls Voter Services "the real core" of League work.

A "local girl" through and through, Phylis was born at the old Mennonite Hospital, attended Unit 5 schools and graduated from Illinois State University. Most of her career was spent in long-term care working as a nursing home administrator. She also worked for an insurer of long-term care operations.

"Educating voters about elections, about voting issues, about candidates, and any other voting information is so vital to our entire country," Phylis says. "This will be a very busy voting year and I'm glad to be involved." And we are glad to have Phylis' leadership!

Judith Valente Reynard

Like us on Facebook!

LWV of McLean County has a Facebook page which is very useful in getting information about our organization out to both members and to the general public. You can find it at this link:



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/McLean-County-League-of-Women-Voters/118148141581526?fref=ts>

Be sure to "like" us so that you will get the posts on our page on your Facebook page. That should keep you current on what is happening in our local group and at State and National League too. Also, it is a great way to share articles that you think might be of interest to others and that pertain to our role (no candidate promotions, of course). Take a look at it and you will get a good idea of how it works.

Another great advantage is that you can share the League articles with your Facebook friends. It has a cascading effect and is an excellent way to publicize the League and to disseminate pertinent information. We now have 195 people that "like" us and our goal is to get to 300 by next June.

Mary Lyn Edwards

Get in Step

Please look for the League members in the Labor Day Parade next Monday, September 7. If you would like to participate and have not already indicated so, please contact Rose Marsaglia at rmarsaglia@msn.com. The more marchers, the merrier the parade!



We're History!

LWVMC is up on Normal's History Boards website. (Thanks to Gretchen Monti for making it happen). The black and white photo is LWV McLean County's founder, Florence Fifer Bohrer. There are some other nice folks too. See our history board and more on the town of Normal's [website](#).



Join us at the League's 95th Anniversary Celebration on September 15 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of B-N, 1613 E. Emerson, Bloomington.

Bring a friend to enjoy the wine and appetizers. Learn about new programs and projects. Find out who won this year's Florence Fifer Bohrer Award and much more! (RSVP to Joe Gibson: 309-530-7561 or jgibson5whitepl@comcast.net)

It's also a great time to join or renew your League membership. Please return your check and this form to Joe Gibson.

Thank you!

LWV of McLean Co. Membership

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Interested in _____

Write your check to LWV McLean County.

Mail check & form to:

LWV McLean County
c/o Joe Gibson
5 White Place
Bloomington, IL 61701

Annual Individual Dues	\$65
2 nd Household Member	\$30
Full Time Student	\$30

Total Enclosed \$ _____