

President's Corner

We knew in December that January would be a busy month and we are not disappointed. On January 11 **Carolyn Landwehr, Gail Anderson**, and I attended the Congressional District 6 health care hearing in Elk Grove Village. The testimony proved to be quite interesting and we were very happy to meet up with Leaguers from Arlington Heights, Glen Ellyn, and Wheaton.

Our 2nd Vice President for Programs, **Ruth Fox**, was able to attract a large crowd to our January general meeting on the Downtown Sector Plan. The Board enjoyed having **Corinne Johnson** in attendance at our last meeting to take the minutes.

Jeannine Schonta, Voter Service chair, met with **Jeanne Davik, Jan Dorner, and Gail Anderson** to plan an online voters guide for the primary election. **Penny O'Neill**, Voter Registration chair, has been scheduling voter registrars at the Elmhurst Public Library and at PTA events over the next several weeks.

This month, we are pleased to welcome new members **Diane Emich, Jean Janecek, Nina Pulliam, and Susan Rose**. A complete list of members who paid dues after the directory was published is included in this newsletter to help you update your directories. This issue also includes two new member profiles by **Corinne Johnson**.

Looking ahead, February will be at least as busy as January. Be sure to reserve your seat at the State of the State Luncheon featuring economist Diane Swonk on Monday, February 13, 2006. Reservations are due February 6th in the state office. I am planning to attend, along with several others from our League, so please call me if you would like to carpool.

As I'm sure you are aware, locally we will focus our attention on the School District 205 referenda and the results of our study. Background information is included in this newsletter and we hope everyone will read the report before attending a consensus meeting. We are looking forward to lively discussions at the homes of **Kay Gavin, Cheri Niewiara, and Jan Vanek**.

See you there!

Laura

January Board Meeting Highlights

- The board accepted the report of the audit committee; the financial records are in good order. The budget was reviewed. Most expenses are on track; those that are not are less than budgeted. Income will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- The February, 2006 general meeting has been rescheduled to February 23, 2006 in the large room at the Elmhurst Public Library at the request of the Study Committee on District 205 Finance. The referenda and the outcome of the League's study will be the topics; committee members will serve as presenters.
- Penny O'Neill will remain in her position as Voter Registration chairman despite her impending move to Countryside. All the Elmhurst PTAs have asked the League to provide voter registrars at one of their winter events.

Local Study on School District 205 Finance

Now that the Board of Education has placed two referenda on the March 21, 2006 ballot, the focus of our study will turn to directly evaluating the merits of these proposals. The committee's report will be distributed to members after January 30, 2006. Members with email will receive the report electronically. **Members who do not have email must contact Laura Kratz to arrange to receive a printed copy.**

The committee hopes each member will become familiar with the two propositions and the criteria that will be used to evaluate them before the report is released. Please read the report before attending the consensus meeting of your choice. Ultimately, through the discussion process, our League may reach consensus and decide to support, oppose, or remain neutral on the ballot issues. Once consensus is reached and a position is formally adopted, the League can adopt and carry out an action plan on the issue.

Sequence of Activities

January

30 Study Committee reports on criteria due; Distribution to membership begins

February

- 2 Morning Consensus Meeting, 9:15 am, home of Kay Gavin
- 8 Evening Consensus Meeting, 7:00 pm, home of Jan Vanek
- 9 Afternoon Consensus Meeting, 12:30 pm, home of Cheri Niewiara

- 11 LWV Elmhurst Board Meeting, 9:00 am

Consensus Meetings results will be reported. Based on results, the Board may vote to support, oppose, or remain neutral on the referenda and whether or not to take action.

12-18 All LWV Elmhurst members will be notified of the Board's final statement.

23 LWV Elmhurst General Meeting on School Referenda; Content will be determined by the outcome of the LWV Board vote.

What are Consensus Meetings?

The study committee has designated three dates, February 2, 8, and 9, 2006 for members to participate in group discussion on the referendum proposals. Members will receive the consensus questions and background information in advance, either electronically or by regular mail.

All League members, including committee members, may participate at only one consensus meeting (although committee members may be present at all consensus meetings). The public may not participate in the consensus. The press is not invited. Each meeting is to be conducted by an experienced discussion leader

What are Consensus Meetings (Continued)

(moderator). A recorder notes the key points of the discussion and the results (i.e., whether there is agreement among the members present and what that agreement is). The study committee reviews the results of each consensus meeting, looking for areas of member agreement and disagreement. The committee summarizes what the members have said and drafts a position for the LWV Board. The collective opinion of the membership is reflected by the consensus.

School District 205 Referenda

PROPOSITION TO ISSUE \$41,000,000 SCHOOL BUILDING BONDS

Shall the Board of Education of Elmhurst Community Unit School District Number 205, DuPage and Cook Counties, Illinois, improve the sites of, build and equip additions to and alter, repair, equip the elementary and middle school buildings of said School District and issue bonds of said School District to the amount of \$41,000,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?

PROPOSITION TO INCREASE MAXIMUM ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL TAX RATE

Shall the maximum annual tax rate for educational purposes for Elmhurst Community Unit School District Number 205, DuPage and Cook Counties, Illinois, be increased and established at 3.5350 percent upon all the taxable property of said School District at the value, as equalized or assessed by the Department of Revenue, instead of 3.2350 percent, the present maximum rate otherwise applicable to the next taxes to be extended for said purposes?

(a) The approximate amount of taxes extendible for educational purposes under the maximum rate now in force in said School District is the sum of \$60,644,572.

(b) The approximate amount of taxes extendible for educational purposes under the proposed increased rate is the sum of \$66,268,489.

(c) The total dollar amount of the most recently approved annual budget of said School District is the sum of \$81,038,669; the total dollar amount of said annual budget, if increased by the amount of additional tax which may be levied if the proposition is approved, is the sum of \$86,662,586; the percentage of increase in the total dollar amount of the most recently approved annual budget of said School District, if such total dollar amount were increased by the amount of additional tax which may be levied if the proposition is approved, is 6.94 percent.

(d) The percentage of increase between the maximum rate at which such taxes for educational purposes may be levied if the proposition is approved and the annual rate at which such taxes for educational purposes is currently levied is 9.27 percent.

Source: DuPage County Election Commission Website, <http://cms.dupageelections.com>

Questions and criteria to be used to evaluate the referenda

Focus of the Study

1. What financial issues have faced District 205?
2. What consequences of insufficient funding has District 205 already experienced?

Referendum Criteria

1. Is the funding request consistent with other positions of the LWVUS, LWVIL, and LWV of Elmhurst?
2. Do income and expense projections portend future financial difficulty?
3. Do enrollment projections portend overcrowding in school facilities?
4. Has the school board communicated specifically where and how the increased funding will impact student learning, achievement, and wellbeing, and ensure equity for diverse student populations?
5. Does the referendum include any new components or expansion of existing opportunities to strengthen the educational program or otherwise impact the quality of student learning, achievement, and wellbeing?
6. Has the school board demonstrated fiscal responsibility by:
 - a. Implementing cost-effective measures?
 - b. Conducting accurate long-range planning?
 - c. Aggressively seeking and securing additional funding from state and other viable sources?
 - d. Lobbying for meaningful school funding reform?
7. Has adequate opportunity been provided for citizen response to the school board's proposals for increased local school funding?
8. Has the school board laid the groundwork for the referendum's success, including setting a realistic timeline and developing working relationships with all segments of the community?

Consensus Question

Does the funding request reflect the values of the community?

Great Decisions

The Great Decisions group will meet as usual on the first Thursday of the month, February 2, at 9:15 a.m., at Kay Gavin's home. We will be discussing the first topic in our new book, **The United Nations: post-summit outlook**.

The morning **Consensus Meeting** will precede our regular Great Decisions discussion. We expect to welcome other League members -- those who choose to attend a morning consensus discussion, as well as members of the District 205 Finance Study Committee. (The evening and afternoon Consensus Meetings will be on Wednesday, February 8, and Thursday, February 9.) Please read the study committee report, which you will receive electronically (or in print if necessary) before the meeting. We want to have an informed discussion.



Report on the Program Planning Meeting Carolyn Landwehr

As scheduled, our Program Planning meeting was held at the Elmhurst Public Library at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 24. **Laura Kratz, Ruth Fox, Patty Spencer, Jan Dorner, and Carolyn Landwehr** discussed what we want to emphasize on the national, state, and local levels.

We agreed that the Elmhurst League would reconfirm its support of the LWVIL's campaign to seek concurrence at the national level on abolition of the death penalty. We think that National should move redistricting (apportionment) to the status of a priority issue. We should continue to support Individual Civil Liberties and the Citizen's Right to Know as an issue priority.

On the state level, we will engage in the study of immigration being supported by several Leagues in our area. We are now working on local education finance.



Health Care Hearing in District 6 Carolyn Landwehr

There were about 30 people at our hearing, but only two members of the Task Force. Laura Kratz and Carolyn Landwehr gave testimony, and a League member from Arlington Heights also spoke. A number of other people testified, including Christine Cegalis, candidate for District 6. Afterwards, we enjoyed talking with those in attendance. All the testimony was recorded; we hope that the Task Force will read it.

Identity Theft Seminars

Sponsored by The City of Elmhurst and the Elmhurst Senior Citizens Commission

Two informative seminars on Identity Theft will be held on successive Saturdays at Elmhurst City Hall, 209 North York: February 18 and February 25. Each one will start at 10 a.m. The speaker will be Cheryl Channic, Financial Education Coordinator for the State of Illinois.



League Takes Aim at Partisan Redistricting **Part of a January 12, 2006, Press Release from the LWVUS**

As a part of its Democracy Agenda, the League of Women Voters has called on the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the partisan gerrymander imposed on the citizens of Texas in 2003.

“Partisan gerrymandering undermines the basic principles of representative government,” according to Kay J. Maxwell, president of the national League. “The Texas League fought this plan when it was presented, and we are proud to join with them in asking the Court to overturn it. Partisan gerrymandering subverts the democratic system because it allows politicians to choose their voters, rather than vice versa. This turns representative government upside-down,” Maxwell said.

By filing this brief the League of Women Voters continues its long history of fighting against attacks on the basic constitutional right to fair and equal representation guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution. Leagues have worked vigorously across the country to secure representative redistricting plans in their states after each census and are seeking reforms to assure that the redistricting process is nonpartisan, equitable and open. These are core rights for citizens of a free and democratic nation.

The League’s Democracy Agenda is an advocacy and public education program to strengthen and renew the basic tenets of American democracy. This effort seeks to protect our electoral processes through election reform and campaign finance reform, advance our representative government through nonpartisan redistricting, and preserve our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties.

