



Shop Talk

*A publication of
the League of
Women Voters of
Elmhurst.*

★ 2011 Elmhurst League of Women Voters ★ Voter Forum

Candidates gathered on Sunday, February 13, 2011 at City Hall for the forum hosted by LWV-Elmhurst.

The voter forum covered our local elections for Park District, City Alderman, and School District 205 Board of Education. The city council chamber was filled with voters eager to learn more about the candidates for the upcoming election on April 5th. Our board president, Laura Kratz was our moderator for both sessions.

Local press including Elmhurst Press, Elmhurst Independent, and The Elmhurst Patch have already covered this event.

A voter guide is posted on our website, <http://lwvelmhurst.org/2011VoterGuide.asp>.

The event was taped and will air on both Comcast (channel 6) and AT & T (channel 99) local access channels beginning in March. Please check the viewing guides in March for exact times.

Mary Kies and Anthony 'Don' Pelosi are running for the 2 open seats for the Park District Board. Mary Kies gave the first opening statement of the day. Mr. Pelosi was not able to attend.

Scott Levin, running unopposed for Alderman of the 5th ward, was next to give an introduction statement about himself. Also running unopposed is Bob Dunn in the 2nd ward. However, Mr. Dunn did not participate in the forum.

In the 7th ward Mark Mulliner also gave a statement as his opponent Dean O'Brien was not able to attend. Both of these candidates appear in the on-line voter guide.

(con't)

LWV Elmhurst Board Members:

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Laura Kratz, President
2009-2011
Donna Blue, First Vice
President 2009-2011
Sue Williams, 2nd Vice
President – Program
2010-2012
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Membership Admin.
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Jan Dorner, Observer
Reports 2009-2011
Gail Anderson,
Publicity 2009-2011
Sue Whitworth, Voter
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Dorothy McGuire,
Voter Registration
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Myrrha Guzman,
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Danee Polomsky, Shop
Talk Editor 2010-2012

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN
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Candidates taking part in the Aldermanic forum were:

Ward 1: Diane Gutenkauf and John Raniere

Ward 3: Paul McLafferty and Dannee Polomsky

Ward 4: Mark Anglewicz, Darlene Heslop, and Steve Hipskind

Ward 6: Rachel Kern and Steve Morley

Four board positions are open for the Elmhurst Community Unit School District 205. All candidates running for spots on the board participated in their portion of the forum.

Those candidates are: Chris Blum, Deborah Conroy, Shannon Hennessey-Ebner, Annette Franklin, Paul Guerino, John McDonough, Bob Robertson Jr. and Karen Stuefen.

◆ **THANK YOU** ◆

Many thanks to the candidates and to those who volunteered at the forum: Laura Kratz, Donna Blue, Dorothy McGuire, Sue Williams, Jan Dorner, Myrrha Guzman, Tonja Pastorelle, Colette Kubiesa, Cheri Niewiara and her children. An additional thank you to Myrrha Guzman and Laura Kratz for pulling together the online Voters Guide.



Calendar

March 8: Great Decisions at the home of Barbara Swords at 1:00 pm.

March 23: LWV monthly meeting: Women of Today and How They See the Future. A panel discussion. 7:00 pm at Elmhurst Public Library.

March 14-31: Early voting for April 5th election

April 5: Election Day

April 27: LWV monthly meeting: Demystifying your Local Taxes and How to Dispute Them. 7:00 pm at Elmhurst Public Library.

May 17: LWV Elmhurst Annual Meeting. 7:00 pm at Francesca's Amici.

Great Decisions

Great Decisions will meet Tuesday, March 8, 2011, 1 p.m., at the home of Barbara Swords.

We will discuss chapter 1 in our new book: "Rebuilding Haiti"--and we will plan our 2011 schedule of reading and discussion for the next months.

The chapter on Haiti contains interesting historical material on this troubled neighbor--and issues of today as it seeks to rebuild.

We are looking forward to beginning our discussions.

-Barbara Swords

★ Program Updates

March Program Meeting **Women of Today and How They See the Future** Wednesday, March 23, 7:00 pm Elmhurst Public Library

A Panel Discussion With:

Rev. Rebecca Clancy, Adjunct Professor of Theology and Pastor, Elmhurst College

Amy Du, Senior, Honor Student and Recipient of the Lincoln Laureate Award, Elmhurst College

Mary Walsh, Professor of Political Science, Elmhurst College

Kathy Willis, Librarian and Teacher, Elmhurst College

Daughters and granddaughters are welcome!

April Program Meeting **Demystifying your Local Taxes:** **Understanding our Local Taxes and How to Dispute Them** Wednesday, April 27 7:00 pm

Christopher Kain, Assessor for Addison Township and Deanna Wilkins, Assessor for York Township will present information on our local taxes and how to dispute them. Addison and York Townships include Addison, Bensenville, Elmhurst, Itasca, Lombard, Oakbrook Terrace, Oak Brook, Villa Park, Wood Dale and portions of Elk Grove Village, Glen Ellyn, Hinsdale and Westmont are included. Please join us!

★ Legislative interview: MEETING WITH SENATOR CAROLE PANKAU (23RD DISTRICT) 2/14/2011

PRESENT: Sharon Burns, Joan Fetterman, Roberta Jacobson, Jan Kay (all LWV Wheaton), Laura Kratz (LWV Elmhurst), Senator Carole Pankau, 23rd district

Illinois Fiscal Crisis

We began with SB1212, a bill Sen. Pankau has introduced that requires the state to use Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) starting in 2013. Rather than looking at what they spent the previous year for determining their budgets, state agencies would have to "start with nothing and then ask for what is absolutely necessary...then adding in the budget needs for necessary items only".

When asked about her views on the current budget, Sen. Pankau said emphatically that she would vote no on SB3 that authorizes borrowing money to pay outstanding debt. She said she favors cutting the state government. She pointed out that no rating agency lowered our interest rates as a result of the tax increase. And she said the bond companies haven't changed our ratings. Our current interest rate is 7% on our loans (bonds) instead of 4.5%. She said, "Now there is the political will to make a change."

Sen. Pankau's priorities:

◆ Medicaid Reform: Medicaid takes "more dollars than elementary and secondary education combined" in Illinois" largely due to the All Kids program, which had no restrictions on it. She has bills in this year that would place restrictions on medicaid participants such as illegal aliens.

◆ Workmen's Compensation Reform: She said that Indiana has about 1/4 of the cost of workmen's' comp in Illinois. Iowa also has lower costs because (con't)

(interview with Senator Carol Pankau, con't)

all payments are based on causality—what is the cause of the issue, and how long payments should continue. She noted that she is the spokesman on the Senate Commerce Committee.

◆ **Education Reform:** Her question: Why are we spending more money to get less results? She said that tenure should be harder to get, though she did not advocate eliminating it entirely. She said it should be based performance, measured by students' test scores. "There should be a base salary and then bonuses applied with performance." Also, schools should be involving the parents. She said she believes that parents are washing their hands (of responsibility) for their children's education, especially low income and immigrant families.

Sen. Pankau said she felt that immigrant parents have an advantage over those of us who have been here for generations in that they can expect their kids to do better than they can do.

She questioned the need for everyone to attend college, citing a Manpower, Inc. survey on job needs that showed only 2 of the top 10 require bachelors degrees. She said that the greatest need was for plumbers and electricians.

◆ **Redistricting:** She supports the principles of redistricting that LWV supports, and said she helped gather signatures for the Fair Map Amendment.

She has introduced a bill to allow Forest Preserve Districts to do their own redistricting, independent of the County Board districts where they are located. She said that, being separate entities, they should be able to draw their own boundaries. She said it is a power struggle between the County Board Chair and the Forest Preserve President, resulting from the County Board President's desire to maintain control over the Forest Preserve's

boundaries. She was asked how this helps the voters, given that many in her party are claiming there are too many levels of government. Her reply: the original language was put in so that people can have the choice of running for either Forest Preserve District or County Board. Her proposed bill would allow Forest Preserve Districts to mirror their County Board.

◆ **Climate Change/Natural Resources:** We discussed factory farms and the threat they pose to groundwater safety and quality. She was unaware that a large scale dairy facility had been built in JoDavies County with no permits or oversight.

◆ **Immigration:** When asked about her views on deputizing local police to enforce immigration laws. Sen. Pankau said police in her community (Itasca) check immigration status and report results to INS. Their perception is that the Feds do nothing about it. She pointed out that people overstay their visas, or other permission to be here, rather than "sneaking in over the border. She was asked if the police think that this is a problem. She said, "they feel it is an act of futility."

◆ **Other Questions:** When asked if she thought we should reduce the prison population to help the budget, Sen. Pankau said she would ask for advice from Tom Johnson who has served on the Illinois Prisoner Review Board has seen both sides of prison issues. She said she thought that "first time offenders are regularly given supervision. For multiple offenders we need something more. Why would they learn the 7th or 8th time?" It was pointed out that repeat offenders could wear an ankle bracelets and the expense of the incarceration could lie on the family and the community. Also the cycle of learning how to be a criminal in *(con't)*

(interview with Senator Carol Pankau, con't)

the penitentiary would be broken.

Asked if she had any particular interest or passions we had not touched on Senator Pankau said, "Part of me subscribes to Pate Phillip's maxim, we don't need more laws." She said that helping her constituents is very important. She likes to put people in touch with a real live human being, to get a person to the right place in state government. "What we do in the district office is the most important. We help people to get to the right department or secretary. This is all that is needed. Helping real people to navigate the system to the right places." ♦

★ LWVIL Annual Issues Briefing Reports

Saturday, February 5, 2011, Chicago, IL

Attendees: Donna Blue, Jeanne Davik, Jan Dorner, Laura Kratz, Carolyn Landwehr, Dorothy McGuire, Marilyn Thompson, Sue Williams, Sue Whitworth

♦ Issues Plenary: New Governor - New Direction?

Ralph Martire, Executive Director, Center for Budget and Tax Accountability, reported on the initial analysis of recent tax increases and spending caps implemented under PA96-1496. He showed that the additional \$7.3 million that the tax increase will bring in will not address the outstanding bills the state owes nor does it equate to increased funds for spending. He also said that, even with very conservative spending cap set, there will be a need for \$1.6 million in cuts per year just to remain balanced. Illinois still does not have sustainability, tax fairness or adequate funding.

Kathy Ryg, former Illinois state representative and current Voices for Illinois Children President, spoke about ways Illinois fiscal cuts will impact Illinois children. Recession and the state fiscal crisis put our key investments in children-- early childhood care and education, health care, child care assistance for working families, mental health services, and child welfare and prevention strategies -- in jeopardy. The public needs to see these expenditures as investments and we need to work for a balanced, responsible approach to fixing the fiscal crisis.

Stan Hudzik, political reporter for Chicago public radio station WBEZ, described the way redistricting should work. Among other things, there should be minority representation in the districts, and the districts should be compact and contiguous. Governor Quinn has promised to do things differently this time. He can veto a redistricting plan put forward by the House and Senate, and it's unlikely the House and Senate would have enough votes to override his veto.

Hudzik also talked about Illinois' financial situation and how it could get more money. He mentioned a tax on services. Some states, including Iowa, have been successful in using a sales tax. In fact, states that relied on a service tax fared better than other states in the economic recession.

♦ Workshops

Effective Ways to Lobby in Springfield:

Paula Purdue: AAUW Legislative Consultant, **Larry Suffredin**: Veteran lobbyist, **Colette Kubiesa**, IL Association of Park Districts.

The panelists encouraged workshop participants to get to know their representatives and (con't)

senators by trying to find common ground. When lobbying, be prepared and know the facts on your issue. Make an appointment, be polite, patient and expect to wait. There are no stupid questions, however keep it short and to the point. Make it personal and don't copy form letters word for word. It can take 8 weeks for a letter to get through to your representatives in Washington. Always follow-up; a thank you note is always a good idea.

Redistricting: Josina Mority, United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations explained that redistricting occurs following the Federal Census and is one of the most important of American political processes, affecting the lives of every person in the state. The Illinois Constitution mandates that the Illinois General Assembly draw the 118 House districts nested in 59 Senate districts and an assigned number of Congressional districts by June 30, 2011. The Governor has veto power. If the legislature fails to do so, an eight-member bipartisan Redistricting Commission of legislators and non-legislators is appointed by party leadership in each chamber to develop a plan, which must be approved by at least five members, by August 10, 2011. Failing that, the Illinois Supreme Court must submit two names (one from each party) to the Secretary of State by September 1. One name must be picked at random by September 5 to be assigned as the tie-breaking ninth member of the Commission. A plan approved by at least five members must be submitted by October 5. It is very important that citizens engage in the redistricting process. Voters should choose their legislators; legislators should not choose their voters via gerrymandering tactics. Redistricting criteria include: equal population (one person, one vote), compact and contiguous (land and point contiguity), conform with Voting Rights Act.

Health Care Reform and Its Impact on Illinois: Julie Hamos, the Director of Illinois Health and Family Services emphasized service delivery reform in Medicaid, with a new focus on keeping people healthy should be our priority. We are slowly giving every Medicaid client a primary care physician, and improving our delivery system by more care coordination, earlier interventions, and more follow-ups. We will strengthen community-based services and home-health services. A goal is cost-containment, especially since by 2013 another 750,000 people will be added to the 2.6 million now receiving Medicaid in Illinois.

Pension Reform: Nathan Anderson, UIC, Department of Economic and Institute of Government and Public Affairs, stated that currently Illinois – Chicago are not doing a good job of funding pensions. The state has funded only 47 % of pensions as of 2010. Some suggestions for a solution: raise the retirement age; reduce cost of living adjustments; increase employee required contributions for existing and new. A tiered level would be a good thing. More information can be found regarding Project FY 2011. Go to <http://igpa.uillinois.edu> and then search for Project FY2011.

-Laura Kratz

◆ Stay Informed ◆

Comcast (channel 6) and AT & T (channel 99) local access channels will be broadcasting the Candidate Forum soon.

Watch Elmhurst School District 205 Board meetings and City of Elmhurst Council meetings online. Go to / www.youtube.com/elmhursttv

Your League in Action

On February 16, 2011 the LWVUS, with coalition partners, urged House and Senate committee leaders to investigate and hold hearings on the systemic problems with the Federal Election Commission.

Dear Senators Lieberman and Collins and Representatives Issa and Cummings:

The under-signed organizations, dedicated to ensuring that federal candidates for public office abide by their legal obligations, respectfully urge your Committee to investigate and hold hearings on the systemic problems with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The FEC is, without question, one of the most dysfunctional agencies in the federal government. The broad powers of each of the oversight committees make them well-suited to identify and bring real attention to the reasons why the FEC has ceased to comply with its statutory mandates.

The FEC is a broken agency that refuses to fulfill its basic statutory functions. Examples of the FEC's ineffectiveness are legion. Time and again, the FEC has either dismissed complaints because the Republican and Democratic Commissioners have rejected efforts by the professional staff to enforce the law, deadlocked in a three-to-three vote, or promulgated rules contrary to the law, resulting in orders from the court to rewrite those rules.

The FEC Commissioners are carrying out what can only be described as "agency nullification," failing to provide for any effective enforcement of the statutes within their purview. There are myriad explanations as to why the FEC is unable to operate effectively, including defects in its structure, composition, and appointment process. Americans expect their elections to be conducted in a fair, honest and lawful manner, but the agency charged with ensuring the integrity of campaign financing is embarrassingly incapacitated. Put simply, the Commission is excessively political and ideological, and the enforcement process is therefore broken.

Our nation's laws should not be undermined by the agency charged with enforcement. It is up to Congress to write the laws and for the courts to determine the constitutionality of the laws. FEC Commissioners may not simply refuse to enforce laws based on their disagreement with the laws, or their predictions of how a court might rule if a law were challenged. Until Congress addresses these problems, candidates, donors, parties and outside spenders will continue to flout the laws with little fear of repercussion.

The status quo is unacceptable and the American public reasonably expects agencies charged with enforcing the laws to actually do so. Our organizations respectfully request that your Committee hold hearings to examine the root causes of the Commission's dysfunction. It is unacceptable that the only agency charged with enforcing campaign financing rules on our nation's highest elected officials is largely AWOL.

Americans for Campaign Reform
Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Common Cause
Democracy 21
League of Women Voters
Public Campaign
Public Citizen
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG)



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