



Area

V O T E E R

June/July, 2010

From Our President

The interplay between politics and economics becomes more complicated every year. We can see how intertwined economic considerations are with issues regarding health care, education, and immigration, not just financial overhaul and employment. One of the issues that continues to haunt our democracy is that of public financing of campaigns. As courts and special interests argue that imposing limits on private contributions to campaigns would violate rights guaranteed under the First Amendment, we have to consider whether democracy even continues to exist when money can be thrown around without limits. Ninety years ago, an organization was formed to work for equality and democracy. That organization was the LWV. We are the recipients of this legacy and must remain ever vigilant as the stakes have never been higher for us. The vision of what a group like the League can accomplish is awe inspiring—never underestimate that! Within the next month, we'll be sending you a list and description of our current League Committees and ask you to participate with your time—even an hour would be welcomed.

Speaking about strong advocates and a passion for public awareness, we'd like to welcome and congratulate our newest Board Members: Shirley May Brynes and Dr. Tana Durnbaugh. Their knowledge and varied experience coupled with our newly formed Board's desire to be relevant in your lives in this digital age is invigorating. League members are vital and exciting people with a lot to teach each other. It's so impressive to think of the number of volunteer hours League members give to this community. We all work hard, but I believe the rewards are well worth it.

In the meantime, we encourage you to join us Wednesday, July 21st, 7 PM, at Myra Becker's home to discuss our 2010-2011 Programs. These programs run the gamut from "Running for Public Office" to "Gravel Mining in Kane County" and all have a direct impact on us—so, mark your calendars for this annual potluck!

In League,

Sígi Psímenos

State of the State Luncheon Report

The League of Women Voters of Illinois, celebrating 90 years, held their annual State of the State Luncheon on June 2 at the Union League Club of Chicago. The Union League was established 125 years ago and it exudes elegance and history with an art collection one could spend hours viewing in total delight. The ambiance as well as the keynote speaker, Patrick Collins, made the luncheon most memorable.

Patrick Collins is the former assistant United States Attorney who prosecuted our state's former governor, George Ryan. Mr. Collins was also appointed by Governor Patrick Quinn to chair the Reform Illinois Commission to help remedy the "culture of corruption" running rampant in our state. He and his committee traveled the state, holding forums to listen to Illinois residents about their thoughts and experiences with Illinois government. From this fact-finding mission, he suggested reform efforts that could have a "game changing" effect on our state. Unfortunately, few of his suggestions were adopted by the Illinois legislature.

Although the League did not collect enough signatures, Attorney Collins praised the League's valiant effort in collecting signatures for Illinois Fair Map, which was one of his proposals to stop corruption. Had the citizens' initiative passed, it would have taken the power of redistricting away from the politicians and put it into the hands of an independent commission, giving the voter a more equitable choice in choosing candidates.

Mr. Collins called on fellow citizens of Illinois and especially civic-minded groups like the League to promote a concerted effort to change the culture of corruption. He said that we cannot blame only the politicians, but also ourselves, for allowing the political scandals and unethical behavior in our state. In his book, *Challenging The Culture of Corruption*, he says: "Ultimately, when corruption continues unabated for decades, it is far too easy for us to throw up our hands and opt out of the political process. When this happens, we collectively suffer a most severe consequence: loss of faith in democracy itself."

Just as the trial of former governor Rod Blagojevich begins, the timeliness of Collins' words were especially profound and add credibility to a former president of the Massachusetts League of Women Voters, Lotte Scharfman, who said, "Democracy is not a spectator sport."

Scharfman was a refugee of Nazi Germany.

—Kaye Gamble



Mock Elections

LWVEA will be heading up mock elections at area high schools this October. Laurel Bault needs help to execute good results. The schools targeted are Dundee-Crown, Larkin in Elgin and South Elgin High School. The county will deliver election machines and material to these schools, and one or more educators will use Student Vote curriculum to give students a true election experience. Please [e-mail Laurel](#) if you are willing to help with this project.

2010 Elected Officials and Candidate Forum

Forum Topic: Issues Affecting People With Disabilities

The Elgin Area League is a part of the coalition sponsoring the candidates' forum on September 16, 2010, at the Christ Community Church on Randall Road in St. Charles.

We anticipate that local candidates and elected officials will participate in this forum. We assume they know the state crisis and look to them for solutions to the impact state funding cuts and state services cuts have on the mentally ill and developmentally disabled population.

Be sure to set this date aside so that you can be there to question your elected officials. This needs to come from the community.

—Myra Becker
and Janet Poyner
Mental Health Committee

Question Elected Leadership

 September 16 



Celebrate New Members and Steadfast Companions

A big League WELCOME to new members:

- Darlene Bakk from Wasco, who is active on the K. C. Mental Health Committee
- Janet Jones, who joins husband, Bill, as a household member, and is active in AAUW

Please take a moment at this time to check your name and contact info in the directory. Contact Membership Chair [Janet Poyner](#) if corrections are needed.



PSSST...and speaking of membership...

Your name will stay on the list and database if you have paid your dues. According to our by-laws you have two months' grace in paying them. Therefore, if you haven't paid by June 30, your name will be put on the inactive list at National and be removed from our local list on July 1st. Your membership is important to us and we don't want to lose you.

—Janet Poyner
Membership Chair

Is Elgin Sustainable Yet?

Of course, sustainability is a process, a series of steps to be taken. Like maturity, art, science, or medicine, there is always more that can be learned or done.

The Elgin Area League of Women Voters is proud to support the Elgin Community Garden Network (ECGN), the two-fold mission of which is to teach sustainable skills and feed the hungry.

Those wishing to practice either are invited to help build the new vegetable garden in Clifford Court, one of the most economically challenged areas of public housing in Elgin. On June 26 at 2:00 p.m., bring gloves, a spade, and sunscreen or hat.

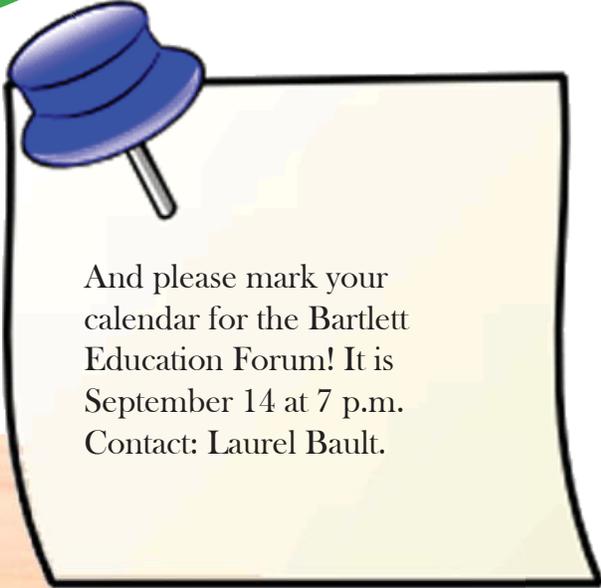


**SERVICE-
LEARNING
OPPORTUNITY**

Elgin's firefighters have generously paid for lumber and soil; together with Klein's, the ECGN is providing vegetable seed and seedlings.

Teens and youth are encouraged to participate. This activity is a good choice for those wanting to engage in community service.

—Donna Askins
Fearless Weeder



And please mark your calendar for the Bartlett Education Forum! It is September 14 at 7 p.m. Contact: Laurel Bault.

NEW BOARD MEETING TIME

Still at the Tyler Towers Clubhouse, and yes, the hour is 7:00 p.m. But please bring your smiling face on the...

third wednesday
Third Wednesday
THIRD WEDNESDAY!!!

...or you will discover the sound of one Leaguer meeting.

Did I mention we're now meeting on the third Wednesday of each month?

See you then!

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shalesmcnuttt.com

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The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through citizen education and advocacy.

* * *

The League of Women Voters of the Elgin Area invites you to become a member of this active, grass roots oriented organization. Individual membership is \$60; add \$30 for each additional member at the same address.

Student membership is \$30.

Please send this coupon with your check payable to:
LWVEA, 569 Franklin Blvd., Elgin, IL 60120

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**The Elgin Area League thanks our
2009-2010 Patrons for their support**



**League of Women Voters of the Elgin Area
1450 Plymouth Lane, #603
Elgin IL 60123-3278**