



Shop Talk

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

Vol. 65 #6
February 2014

Visit us at website lwvelmhurst.org

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Next League Meeting: Thursday, February 20, Elmhurst Public Library

LWVIL Issues Briefing

Despite predictions of 8 – 10 inches of snow on February 1, these eight Elmhurst Leaguers braved what was potentially the worst storm of the season to attend the LWVIL Issues Briefing in the Chicago Loop: Sue Whitworth, Jan Dorner, Sue Williams, Laura Kratz, Marilyn Thompson, Carol Rounds, Elaine Davison, and Jeanne Davik. Here are brief summaries on the topics covered. All the speakers had supporting materials, which are viewable at <http://www.lwvil.org/issues-briefing.html>



(Pictured: Sue Williams and Sue Whitworth)

• Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking) in Illinois



What is it? The industry defines it as “the process of injecting a fluid or gas under pressure to crack open (fracture) hydrocarbon saturated rock so that oil, natural gas liquids, or methane can be extracted. **Why do it?** It could provide a 100-year natural gas supply, low cost energy for consumers, energy independence, and lots of jobs.

Why not do it? The water can never be used again; the chemicals (including some “trade secret” chemicals) are highly toxic; and because shale in Illinois is close to the surface, water wells are likely to be at risk. The League does not have a position on Fracking, but the three speakers were clearly opposed. One summarized the alternatives this way: **Energy Independence vs. Growing our Carbon Coffin**. Pictured are **Dr. William Rau** from ISU and **Jessica Fujan** from *Food & Water Watch*. – Jeanne Davik

Note: Although we do not have a position on Fracking per se, we do have existing National positions on Water, Land Use, and Energy that have been – and continue to be – applied to legislation and regulation on this issue.

- **Redistricting**



This issue has been covered in past Issues Briefings, so not much new was presented. LWVIL Executive Director Mary Schaafsma gave a brief overview of what the League has done over the last couple of years. Ruth Greenwood, Chicago Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, presented some maps showing how different boundaries could be drawn using different criteria. **Ryan Blitstein**, [Yes for Independent Maps](#), (pictured at left) spoke about the Illinois State Constitutional Amendment that the group is working to get on the November ballot. If you would like to pass petitions, go to <http://independentmaps.org/get-involved>. – Jan Dorner

- **GRIT : Graduated Rate Income Tax**

The presenter was **Kate Barthelme** from Midwest Academy. LWVIL is partnering with **A Better Illinois** to educate ourselves, our legislators, and voters on GRIT – Graduated Income Tax for a better Illinois. This workshop focused on advocacy, as well as strategies to help us build a better understanding of *GRIT* and how it could work. Currently families earning less than \$57,000 pay 10.9% in taxes in Illinois, while families earning \$445,000 or more pay only 4.9%. Illinois residents should be taxed reasonably to keep up with a modern economy. – Sue Whitworth

Note: Adoption of GRIT has been a long-standing goal of the League. An LWVIL committee is actively lobbying to build support around the state.

- **Healthcare: Where ACA Stands**

The speaker, **Stephani Becker** from the **Shriver National Center for Poverty Law**, along with Stephanie Altman, who is also with Shriver, had trained ACA



Navigators around the state. They noted that there were 600,000 people in Illinois, ages 19 – 64, who were newly eligible for Medicaid; and 700,000 people who were eligible for tax credits in the marketplace. So far 136,000 people have enrolled in the Medicaid Expansion, and 61,000 have selected health plans from among the 165 available in the Illinois marketplace. One final statistic: The total number of uninsured in DuPage County is 86,370.

What are the goals at this point? Mainly, insurance coverage for everyone who doesn't have employer coverage. For Medicaid recipients a secondary goal is to get them into an MCO (Managed Care plan similar to an HMO). The official health marketplace in Illinois, in partnership with the federal ACA website, can be found at getcoveredillinois.gov. We were encouraged to check it out. – Jeanne Davik

- **Gun Violence Prevention: Concealed Carry and Other News**

The presenter was **Mark Walsh, Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence**. Before Mr. Walsh joined I.C.A.H.V. he worked for aldermen within the City of Chicago. Every morning he would be called by area police with updates on crime and violence in those neighborhoods represented by the aldermen. These calls fired his passion to work at preventing hand gun violence.

If a business does not want to allow guns in their establishment, they must post the official NO GUN sign which includes a red slash through a handgun. However, the building owner must also give permission for posting the sign.



Concealed guns are still not permitted in hospitals, assisted living centers (such as, mental health facilities or senior housing) schools, and public transportation. The restricted areas in the legislation did not include places of worship. Mr. Walsh feels amendments of all types will continue to be proposed on this bill. – Sue Whitworth

- **Storm Water Project**



The speaker, **Harriet Festing**, is director of the non-profit **Center for Neighborhood Technology**. The focus of this Chicago-based group is “Rain Readiness” -- anywhere that floods -- as opposed to the FEMA approach, which is mostly geared toward floodplain areas. One part of Rain Readiness involves the study of each property independently since each has a somewhat different solution. From there clusters of properties are considered and then entire communities. Ultimately we want to “wetrofit” these properties and avoid

building cities in such a way that they actually *cause* flooding. – Jeanne Davik

CNT has been assessing and recommending retrofits for homes to help prevent flooding. In 2014 they will work with 13 homeowners in the same neighborhood (only available in Chicago) to test the success of this program. In the future, CNT plans to expand Wetrofit to work with residents and municipalities. – Sue Williams

(Pictured: Laura Kratz and Marilyn Thompson)

- **Charter Schools: Are they reaching their Goals?**

Jameson Brewer from the **Forum on the Future of Public Education** at the University of Illinois presented information on Charter Schools. He stated that although one of the initial goals of Charter Schools was innovation in teaching, the only consistent innovation from Charters is in marketing and management. He presented some research that showed that nationally, Charters produce less or the same academic level as traditional public schools. – Jan Dornier

Note: *Delegates approved a restudy/update of our Charter Schools position at the LWVIL Convention last year.*

- **Plowing Through the LWVUS Agriculture Study**

Sheri Latash, the Sustainable Food & Water Issue Specialist for LWVIL, discussed the LWVUS Agriculture Study. Many Leagues are finding this study challenging with a due date of April 18. A few options are: 1. Do the best you can to complete consensus. 2. Work with other Leagues and hold joint consensus meetings. 3. Limit your focus to one or more questions. 4. Read the study materials to educate yourself. 5. Do nothing. 6. Consider submitting your Program Planning document to LWVUS (due March 1) requesting an extension of the study. – Sue Williams

President's Post: Sue Whitworth

In June the 51st League of Women Voters National Convention will be held in Dallas, Texas. Every two years state and local Leagues and ILO's participate in the LWVUS Program Planning process by making recommendations concerning program issues. This is one of the ways we remain a grassroots organization. The Program Planning process is an important League tool for identifying issues for study, review and update, and/or concurrence. It gives members and Leagues the opportunity to balance the pros and cons, assess possible support, and consider the viability of issues.



MEMBERS: Let your voice be heard! Join us at 6:30pm on **Thursday, February 20th** at the **Elmhurst Public Library** for our LWV Program Planning.

2014 Gubernatorial Debates

The LWVIL has been busy scheduling debates among the four Republican Gubernatorial candidates. The first one, co-sponsored by the League and all the public broadcast stations in the state, has already been held. On Thursday, January 23, Jan Dorner and LWVIL Executive Director Mary Schaafsma drove downstate and back for this debate, held at the public television studios of WTVP in Peoria. Public television and radio stations in Peoria, Urbana, Carbondale, Charleston, the Quad Cities, Springfield, Macomb and Quincy carried this 90-minute forum, and it was streamed live on the web. The candidates were civil to one another, and all present seemed pleased with proceedings.



The four Republican Gubernatorial candidates will square off again at ABC7 in a forum co-sponsored by LWVIL and Univision. The taping will take place Thursday, February 27, and it will be streamed live at abc7chicago.com. The broadcast in **primetime** will be Friday, February 28, at 7 pm on ABC7. This is one of only a handful of debates with all four Republican Gubernatorial candidates present. – Jan Dorner

Election Calendar leading to General Primary Election, March 18

The last day for deputy registrars to **register** an applicant is February 18, 2014. **New:** Any citizen who will be 18 years old or older by November 4, 2014, is eligible to register and vote in the March 18 Primary Election.

Grace period registration runs from February 19 – March 15, 2014, and will be available at the DuPage Election Commission, 421 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton. Anyone wishing to do this type of registration should be prepared to register and vote at the same time.



Absentee voting: Anyone wishing to vote absentee is able to apply for a ballot starting Thursday, February 6, 2014. One can apply in person (at the Election Commission), by mail or by email. Go to <https://www.dupageco.org/Election/Voters/41942/> to fill out an application or call 630-407-5600 to request an application. No reason is needed to vote absentee. Note that a postage paid return envelope is no longer included with the ballot.

Early Voting will take place at Elmhurst City Hall from Monday, March 3, through Saturday, March 15, 2014, between 8:30 am and 7:30 pm Monday through Friday, and 9 am until 3 pm Saturday, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 209 N. York Street. In order to Early Vote you must be a registered DuPage County voter and present a government issued photo identification. An early voter is not required to state a reason for voting early. [Early Voting sites in DuPage County.](#)

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- **Visit our website** – www.lwvelmhurst.org – for the latest information on our issues and events, as well as current and past issues of **Observer Reports** and **Shop Talk**, which you can print.

