



# Shop Talk

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

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Visit us at [lwvelmhurst.org](http://lwvelmhurst.org)

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## TOAST TO JAN!

Join us on Wednesday, July 10, at the Flight 112 Wine Bar as we pay tribute to our own Jan Dorner, retiring president of the League of Women Voters of Illinois. \$30 per person, payable at the door, includes wine tasting and appetizers. For more info go to our website [www.lwvelmhurst.org](http://www.lwvelmhurst.org).

## LWVIL CONVENTION 2013

**Central Issues: Fracking, Charter Schools,  
State Pension Reform**

*Contributors to the articles below: Jan Dorner, Sue Whitworth,  
Myrrha Guzman, and Jeanne Davik.*

**Fracking** – *What is it?* Hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking”, is the process of drilling and injecting fluid into the ground at a high pressure in order to fracture shale rocks to release natural gas inside. The fracking fluid contains chemicals that can contaminate ground water and be hazardous to human health and the environment.

Fracking operations have been concentrated on the East Coast, particularly Pennsylvania. However, fracking-related activities are coming closer – to Starved Rock State Park, just

86 miles from Elmhurst. What is set to occur there is open pit mining for silica sand to ultimately be used in the fracking process elsewhere. After considerable discussion about how to proceed, delegates approved a “Will of Convention” on fracking. (See *the Caucus report, Protecting Illinois from Fracking, for details.*)

**Charter Schools** – The LWVIL position dates back to 2001. Many Local Leagues and the Education Specialists on the Issues Committee agreed that the effect of withdrawing funds from public schools for charter schools, and the effectiveness of charter schools themselves should be examined. Convention delegates agreed that an update was in order.

**State Pension Reform** – Delegates voted to table “indefinitely” the position on State Pension Reform that had been approved by the State Board in January, 2013, following a study of the issue. Speakers were critical of both the process and the conclusions of the study.

*Note: All current positions, as stated in Where We Stand, 2011-2013 (with the exception of the Charter Schools position), were readopted. None of the non-recommended program items were brought before the convention for consideration.*

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## **ISSUES for ACTION – Our Focus during 2013-2015:**

- ▶ Climate Change, ▶ Fiscal Policy and Tax Reform, with a Constitutional amendment to allow for GRIT (graduated rate income tax) in Illinois to follow,
- ▶ Gun Violence Prevention, ▶ Redistricting Reform, and ▶ Voting Rights.



***Pictured at Right:*** Jan Dorner, LWVIL president, and Laura Kratz, Issues vice-president, both of whom retired from the LWVIL Board following the 2013 Convention.

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## **CAUCUS Reports:**

### **► *Protecting Illinois from Fracking***

Efforts to put a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in Illinois (fracking) have been defeated. Many members attended this caucus to encourage the LWVIL to take action in making sure that any hydraulic fracturing activity in this state serves the best interests of the citizens. This resulted in the passing of a Will of Convention by the delegates expressing their request that the LWVIL support regulation that addresses hydraulic fracturing in Illinois to insure the protection of Illinois residents, tourism, and the environment.

### **► *Flat Doesn't Work: A Better Illinois Alternative – the Graduated Income Tax (GRIT)***

The Illinois State Constitution limits income tax to a “non-graduated rate” (flat-rate income tax). The LWVIL supports a Constitutional amendment that would allow for a “progressive income tax with a graduated rate schedule.” To achieve this “fairer tax,” LWVIL encourages local Leagues to become active in educating and encouraging the public and legislators to support a constitutional amendment. Sixty percent (60%) of the General Assembly must first pass a bill calling for a referendum to be placed on the November 2014 ballot. Then, a majority of those voting on the referendum in the November 2014 election must approve the referendum.

*Quick facts from another session of this caucus:*

Under the current flat tax system, families earning \$18,000 pay 13.8% of their income in taxes, while families earning \$445,000 pay only 4.9%. Illinois pays the least for public education among the 50 states. A majority of the states (34) have a graduated rate income tax.

### **► *Community Colleges 101: What's Happening in Your Area?***

This caucus was exploratory. Is there sufficient interest in Community Colleges among

Illinois Leagues to merit a study? Many members of this popular caucus were adjunct faculty members at a CC. Here is a sampling of the points made: (1) High schools have dropped vocational classes, and CC's have picked up the slack. (2) Student loans and debts will impact CC's in the future. (3) Partnerships between the League and CC's are a good idea, membership-wise.

New faculty issues have emerged recently. For example, "adjuncts" (usually the majority of the faculty) are seeing their hours cut from 30 to 20, thereby removing them from coverage under the Affordable Care Act – one of those unintended consequences.



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The Elmhurst League was well represented at the State Convention, June 7 – 9, in Bloomington, IL.

Pictured at left are Myrrha Guzman, Webmaster; Jan Dörner and Laura Kratz, to whom we paid tribute for their years of service on the state board; our new Elmhurst League president, Sue Whitworth; and Jeanne Davik, *Shop Talk* editor.

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## **WORKSHOP Reports:**

### **► *Anatomy of a Public Meeting Fiasco***

A fiasco can occur when protestors – possibly *hired* protestors – invade a public meeting for the purpose of disrupting it. According to the moderator, Ann Logue, this happens “all the time” in Chicago. In the recent past, Leagues outside of Chicago reported experiencing this kind of disruption as well. Workshop participants suggested better ways to organize a public meeting, better ways to manage the logistics during the meeting, and

an examination of ways to get citizen participation which is more in line with the organizers' goals for having the public meeting.

► ***Water, Water Everywhere; Is It Safe to Drink?***



The answer is yes, but it could be cleaner while it lasts. The average family of 4 consumes 400 gallons of water a day. Michael Brown, Director of the Ecology Action Center serving McLean County, presented a very informative workshop on environmental concerns. Urban pollution run off, drought, and nitrates and fertilizers used in farming are all areas of concern for our future water supply. Weeds steal water, while hardy native wildflowers and grasses help absorb rain water due to longer root systems. (Learn more by attending Greenfest, August 3, in Wilder Park from 10 am to 3 pm. Go to <http://www.elmhurstgreenfest.org/> for more information.)

► ***Citizens United: Now What?***

The consideration of Money in Elections brings out more questions than answers. Is disclosure really a deterrent? Or is it too late since the money has already been spent? There's also the "Russian doll" problem: You remove the outer doll, and there's another and then another inside. In terms of campaign finance, the donor gives to one organization, which in turn gives to another, which may give to yet another. Disclosure involves dropping just one level, not reaching all the way down to the rich donor who is the source of the campaign funds. Is public funding still a viable option? Yes, said Pat Donath, LWVUS Board member who led the workshop.

► ***Stayin' Alive, Building Membership and Leadership***

Focusing on the Nominating Committee's role in finding and presenting a slate of Board nominees, this program explained the steps in ensuring an active and strong membership and Board by: 1) Establishing the local league's goals and objectives for the year; 2) Identifying the League's needs; 3) Evaluating the skills, representation, and performance

of incumbents, 4) Finding leaders; and 5) Conducting personal interviews. We should look for potential new members and leaders by monitoring the community, and identifying influential individuals and good workers throughout the year. We should make it a point at each program that we hold, and at every event we attend, personally, to find ways to discuss League activities, invite our audience to future League events, and encourage them to find out more about the League and/or become members.

► **100 years of voting . . . Power, Influence, and Change. Leading suffragists from Chicago's North Shore**

Put on by the Evanston League, this program highlighted the women who played major roles in the fight for women's suffrage in Illinois. We learned how each of the women featured, including Grace Wilbur Trout, Catharine Waugh McCulloch, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Jane Addams, became involved in politics and the cause; the political climate leading up to time the Suffrage Bill passed; and the reaction of the passage of the Bill. The Evanston League also published a book containing the women and history described in the program, which was provided to all Convention attendees to share with their local libraries and members.

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**CHAT Reports:**

► **Mental Health** – This meeting explained the State League's position regarding services provided to mentally ill persons. It was explained that a 2011 gubernatorial mandate required counties and Cook County townships with no local mental health authorities to form mental health advisory committees to identify and assess current mental health services, monitoring the expansion or contraction of those services, and recommending additional services. Chat attendees learned of the League's current and anticipated efforts to monitor legislation, provide advice, information and outreach to local Leagues interested in mental health education programs and advocacy.



► **Publicity** – A Publicity chat was offered by the McLean County League. Delegates

from all over the state shared what often works, and doesn't work, when it comes to getting publicity. One idea that we put into action was the addition of an LWV Elmhurst Facebook Page. If you are on Facebook, please Follow us and Like us at <https://www.facebook.com/LeagueOfWomenVotersElmhurst/>.

► **Presidents' Lunch** – Not exactly a “chat” since attendance was limited to local League presidents or their counterparts, who met with the LWVIL president, Jan Dornier, over lunch. Our Elmhurst president, Sue Whitworth, reported, “At the Presidents' Luncheon I had the opportunity to meet other League Presidents and felt humbled to be among such a bright and dedicated group of people.” She added, “The DuPage presidents plan to continue a cooperative networking connection with each other.”

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### **Membership Note:**

If you haven't renewed your membership yet, send your dues to LWV of Elmhurst, P.O. Box 12, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or pay online at [lwvelmhurst.org/joinLWV.asp](http://lwvelmhurst.org/joinLWV.asp).



If you would like to be included in the 2013-2014 Directory, please email Sue Williams immediately: [membership@lwvelmhurst.org](mailto:membership@lwvelmhurst.org) . The new Directories will be available for members on July 10 at our *Toast to Jan* event. See you there!

**Visit our Website,** [lwvelmhurst.org](http://lwvelmhurst.org), regularly for all the latest info on our issues and events.