After days of rainy and cold weather, May 17th was warm and clear, providing lovely conditions for the 2010 Annual Meeting. Mary Ritter opened her home and enhanced the warmth of the day with her gracious hospitality. Conversation groups filled every space. After much catching up, members enjoyed a delicious pasta dinner from Wisma. Over dessert, members got down to business.

The meeting went swiftly and smoothly. A busy Program based on many National and State priorities was adopted. The Proposed Budget and Bylaw amendments were approved. And finally, the Nominating Slate was voted for unanimously.

Many thanks go to retiring LWV-LF/LB Area Board members: Carol Gilbert, Ann Hamlin, Robbyn McFadden, and Marilyn Shineflug. And welcome to Midge Heurich, who will be the Lake Michigan LWV Liaison.
At the Beijing Women’s Forum in 1995 we U.S. women were exhorted “to go home and make democracy work; for the U.S. is the hope of the world.” We, League of Women Voters, have the best opportunity to make democracy work through our candidate forums, voter registration, and education on public policy issues. We must remember that our non-partisan perspective informs all our activity, even though our members may have partisan views. And we have political positions that we have studied as thoroughly as possible and we act upon them.

President McNamara also spoke about current lack of civility, a problem we have faced here in Lake County this year. Even George Washington, at age 16, in his small book on civil manners noted first the importance of listening to and being civil to “all who are present.” “Always remember George!” It is imperative that our leadership model and encourage listening and discussion based upon facts.

On April 10th our monthly meeting, partnered with Mothers Trust Foundation, featured Ralph Martire, from the non-partisan Office of Tax and Budget Accountability. Kathy Ryg, from Voices of Illinois Children, and Kristy Long of United Way. The panel made clear that education, health and human services all come out of only 21 percent of the state budget. Consequently, cuts hurt our children, particularly the many living in poverty. And when our children are poorly educated, they are unprepared for the workforce in our state. The meeting at Gorton was broadcast on Ch. 17 and 19 all of May and can be made available to anyone interested … which brings us to encourage all of you to attend our monthly meetings for meaningful dialogue and for getting to know each other better. We were happy to see that our annual meeting at Mary Ritter’s was very well attended. If you weren’t there, you missed some good food, great conversation and a productive meeting!

Liz Bradner, Mary Mathews, Cindy Morehead, Jane Partridge, and Diane Sanderson attended the LWVIL Convention in June. The convention was galvanizing. We return energized with new ideas and fresh information and eager to progress with what we’ve learned from other Leagues.

Looking ahead this summer, we need your help to design and grace the floats for the Lake Bluff July 4th parade and the 150th Anniversary Lake Forest Day Parade on August 3rd. Our League history, if you include the fight for women’s suffrage that led to the direct establishment of the LWV in 1920, and the 91 years since, is approximately parallel to Lake Forest’s 150 years of history. It was well-to-do and middle-class women who led the charge, often at their own peril. We’re not asking you “to lay down your life,” but we are inviting all of you to join us “make democracy work,” in whatever way, large or small.

Next year we would like to have local League members observe our local governmental board meetings. If this interests you, let us know and what board you would like to observe. We also need League members to serve on study groups. For instance, the LWVUS wants input by November 30 on “The Federal Role in Public Education” (see page 7). Some of you have evinced interest in certain topics of local interest as well.

We will host a New Membership affair in September, and we have been planning some interesting programs, including a Holiday Luncheon with a new actress and storyteller as well as candidate forums in February. Bring a new member and bring your ideas. Your support in whatever way is important!

Have a good summer and hope to see you in a parade.

Jane and Mary

Report on the LWVIL Convention, June 10-12

Four members of our league – Jane Partridge, Mary Mathews, Liz Bradner, and Cindy Morehead – attended the Biennial LWVIL Convention in Skokie the weekend of June 10th. We joined more than 90 delegates representing 28 leagues throughout Illinois for 2½ days of meetings, workshops and networking. We went to two workshops Friday afternoon and another Saturday afternoon. I especially enjoyed the workshop on “Grass Roots Organizing,” led by Cheryl Wollin, where I learned about the 11-year struggle to get legislation passed to abolish the death penalty. At the dinner Friday evening we were entertained by Mary Ann Ahern, political reporter at NBC Chicago, who told many anecdotes about her experiences with Mayor Daley and Rahm Emanuel. One convention highlight was the keynote speech on Saturday by the new LWVUS President, Elizabeth MacNamara. Her passion about the importance of the League’s continuing battle to safeguard voters’ rights as well as the struggle to keep Congress from gutting the Clean Air Act was truly inspiring.

At the two plenary sessions Saturday and Sunday, we discussed and passed the budget and the State League Program for the next two years. At the recommendation of the State Board, we approved a new study of the pension problems and proposals for pension reform in Illinois. Other issues the Illinois League will focus on in the next two years are fiscal policy and tax reform, campaign finance and ethics reform, redistricting reform, immigration, climate change, and regulation of large-scale livestock facilities. Liz commented, “It was exciting to discuss state-wide issues and whether the League should take them on. I was proud to work for an organization that takes responsibility for social justice.”

We hope many of you will want to join League members throughout the State in studying, educating the public, and advocating on these important issues.

Cindy Morehead
Spotlight on League Achievement

At the biennial Convention, LWVIL shined a “Spotlight on League Achievement” on LWV-LFLB by recognizing its attractive and informative communications: appealing website, quarterly newsletter, monthly e-alert, community signs, and public access TV ads. Congratulations!

Lake County Redistricting Doesn’t Benefit Residents

Under the leadership of LWV-Lake County, LWV-Lake Forest/Lake Bluff Area worked with the Highland Park and Deerfield Leagues on the recent county redistricting. After the census, just as at the state and Congressional levels, the County must draw new county board districts.

In March, 2011 the Lake County Board established a Reapportionment Committee. The Leagues along with the Mexican American Legal Defense Education Fund (MALDEF) and the NAACP were invited to be part of the process. League members attended a couple of meetings and gave testimony. David Stolman, Chairman of the Lake County Board, wanted to prevent a lawsuit, similar to the one MALDEF filed 10 years ago when the County did not comply with the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act requires the creation of districts that provide an opportunity for minorities to elect a candidate of their choice when certain conditions are met. It requires officials to consider race to help ensure that the redistricting plans do not dilute minority voting strength. Other requirements for redistricting include: equal population in each district, contiguous and compact districts, and the minimization of municipal and township fracturing.

Although the requirements of the Voting Rights Act were met, the Leagues, MALDEF, and NAACP were disappointed with the Reapportionment Committee. Contrary to the Lake County League’s recommendations to County Board members, there was no public notification, no public hearings, and no transparency with the process. While Chairman Stolman stated politics would not be involved, the results show otherwise. There was gerrymandering throughout the county. Municipalities were fractured unnecessarily. Districts were not compact. Deerfield was divided into three different districts, with part of it added to the new district that includes most of Lake Forest and part of Highland Park (District 12). Lake Bluff was separated from Lake Forest. Instead it will be in a district that extends all the way to Gages Lake (District 13). Lake Bluff with about 5,700 residents will have a minority voice in a district of 33,498 people. The Lake County Board approved the new map on June 14, 2011.

The new map was not drawn to benefit the residents of Lake County. Instead, political maneuvering was used to help the majority party. As the Fair Map Amendment did not get on the ballot last fall, the League needs to continue to work towards a better redistricting process at all levels.

New Lake County Board Districts 12 and 13. Visit our website at www.LWV-LFLB.org for a link to the complete map.
Action Spotlight: National and State

Leagues at various levels are taking action, making a difference and stirring up controversy over the issue of clean air. This spring the National League ran ads supporting the Clean Air Act. The ads were strong and named senators who voted to compromise the act.

Here in Illinois, LWVIL Issues Specialist Laura Kratz testified at an EPA Hearing on Air Toxics Rule on May 24. Below are excerpts from her testimony.

... Since our national study on air pollution in the early 1970s, the League has actively supported federal air pollution controls on industrial production, governmental installations, fuels and vehicles. ... League members helped pass the landmark Clean Water Act in the early 1970s and have worked to protect, expand and strengthen it through the 1990s and we continue to do so in this century.

Spring Programs

The League had a very busy spring with a variety of activities appealing to a wide audience. The highlights are listed below. If you missed one of the programs, most of them have been videotaped and can be viewed on our website, www.LWV-LFLB.org.

In March, the League looked outside our national borders for interesting and timely programs. AAUW and Lake Forest/Lake Bluff Senior Center joined us in sponsoring “Cuba and the U.S.: Will They Ever Be Friends?” Dr. Alberto Coll, a well-known speaker, provided such a fascinating presentation that Jane Partridge is trying to organize a trip to Cuba for League members next winter.

Also in March, LWV-LFLB teamed up with other leagues on the North Shore and held a luncheon at The Glen. Dr. Rachel Bronson, V.P. at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, spoke about the abysmal conditions in Afghanistan and other Middle East hot spots.

Following up on our outstanding fall program, “Illinois’ Fiscal Crisis,” the League teamed up with Mothers Trust Foundation to offer another look at the state’s economic problems. Ralph Martire, Executive Director of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, led off the panel discussion of “At Whose Cost? Our Children.” Kathy Ryg, President of Voices for Illinois Children, and Kristi Long, President of United Way of Lake County, added their expertise. Even with the income tax increase, there remains a grave shortfall in funding state government.

To help educate voters for the April Consolidated General Elections, we provided a Video Voter Guide of the 12 candidates running for the three school boards. This proved to be a very popular tool.

Stay tuned for information about our upcoming fall programs and be sure to attend!
Interview With Congressman Robert Dold

On Thursday, April 28, 2011 at 1 p.m., representatives of 10th District Leagues met with U.S. Congressman Robert Dold. The meeting was chaired by Joan Kaltas of the Lake County League.

Ms. Kaltas explained that the League of Women Voters is a large organization, in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Hong Kong and that there are 44 leagues in Illinois. She said that we are non-partisan, and advocate positions on issues but do not support specific candidates. The 15 league representatives then introduced themselves. Congressman Dold described himself as owner of a family business in pest management who grew up in this district. He has been a scoutmaster for 11 years and is an Eagle Scout himself.

Congressman Dold’s priorities are Great Lakes protection, human rights, jobs and the economy, and reducing federal spending. Along with Democratic Congressman Lipinski, he introduced the Great Lakes Water Protection Act. It was referred to the Transportation Infrastructure Committee. It is also supported by US Senators Kirk and Durbin. On human rights, he introduced bills supporting the Bahais in Iran and recognizing the Armenian Genocide. On jobs and the economy, he supports pro-growth strategies for the private sector, not government. He works with the nine Democratic freshmen on this, as well as the 86 other Republican freshmen. He wants only smart regulation of business, not constraining regulations such as the 1099 requirement for small business. He supported repeal of this requirement.

On spending reduction, Dold believes the Republican interests, e.g., in defense and agricultural subsidies, should be cut first, to show good faith to the Democrats. Every federal department should be cut except aid to Israel since it is our “only ally” in the Middle East. Dold believes overspending must be stopped by both parties “if the American dream is to come true for our children and grandchildren.”

On the Clean Air Act, Dold said the EPA “fills a role” and that the carbon footprint must be reduced, but only in ways that don’t put companies out of business. Some regulation is needed but it must pay off for business. He favors extension of the renewable energy tax credits due to expire in 2012.

On voting rights, Dold favors making it easier to vote. A signature, not a picture, should be required to identify voters. On transparency, due to the Citizens United decision, he fears that shell corporations are cropping up to enable rich individuals to influence elections.

On civility, i.e., partisan bickering, he seemed proud of working with Illinois Democrats (e.g., Gutierrez, Lipinski, etc.), the nine freshmen Democrats, and the “blue dog” Democrats on legislation. He said moderates like himself in Congress are rare due to redistricting that protects safe districts for both parties. He also said that independent voters determine elections, and they will swing to the other party if incumbents don’t produce. When asked about dissension within the Republican Party, he said that across-the-board cuts are needed but again, not in aid to Israel. This aid also must be audited to ensure that it doesn’t go to terrorists (Hamas). He believes both parties are angry that the Administration didn’t consult Congress before entering the conflict in Libya. He supported ending the Joint Strike Fighter program.

On the Affordable Health Care Act, he criticized the process by which it was written without Republican input more than the content. He said we need health care reform, citing that cost for health care in his company has risen 44% in a short period. He would replace/reform provisions rather than repeal it. He favors the preexisting conditions provision but wants malpractice reform and competition across state lines so that employers can purchase plans anywhere in the country.

Joan thanked Dold and told him that the League wants him to succeed. She promised many future requests to meet with him.

Liz Bradner, Recorder

LWVIL “State of the State” Luncheon

Charles Thomas, political reporter for ABC7 News, was the speaker at the annual State of the State Luncheon held by the LWV of Illinois on April 29th at the Union League Club in Chicago. Mr. Thomas is pictured here with Nancy Marcus, President of LWVIL.

Mr. Thomas's topic was “Reform”; this term usually implies a positive change, but he pointed out that it is often used to hide the real agenda. LWV-Lake Forest/Lake Bluff members enjoyed lunch and networking with members of many other Leagues. The League also used the event to celebrate Governor Quinn’s signing of the bill to abolish the death penalty in Illinois.
News and Activity From LWVIL

LWVIL - 2011 News from Springfield

Accomplished!

- Death Penalty Abolition Bill signed into law March 9 by Gov. Quinn!
- Redistricting Bill signed into law March 7 (provides for communities of interest but is weak in calling for an open public hearing process)

We have been watching many bills in the IL General Assembly and sent out the following Time For Actions (TFAs) to members or letters on the following:

- Feb. 15, 2011 – TFA to request legislators support SB 3 in order to pay Illinois’ bills
- Feb. 23, 2011 – permission from LWVUS to sign on to an Environment IL letter going to our US Senators Kirk and Durbin asking them to oppose efforts to undermine Clean Air Act.
- Feb. 23, 2011 – permission from LWVUS to sign on to letter from Housing Action Illinois to our Illinois senators requesting them to oppose spending cuts to Federal Housing Programs.
- March 7, 2011 – TFA to contact legislators to support Campaign Contribution Limits for Legislative Leaders and Political Parties in the General Election
- March 9, 2011 – Letter to Editor (Tribune, Sun-Times, Daily Herald, State Journal-Register, and Pioneer Press) in support of the Clean Air Act at the request of LWVUS (signed by Nancy Marcus)
- March 9, 2011 – ENews to report signing of Death Penalty Abolition Bill and request thank you's to Governor
- March 10, 2011 – TFA to ask state senators to oppose school voucher bill (SB 1932)
- March 21, 2011 – TFA on Health Care to Support H.B. 1501 and S.B. 1619
- March 22, 2011 – TFA to oppose HB 148 and SB 82 – Concealed Carrying of Weapons (CCW)
- April 5, 2011 – Letters to legislators from President Nancy Marcus opposing SB 79 charter schools
- April 12, 2011 – TFA to oppose SB 1932 School Voucher Bill

You, too, can be involved with these issues and more. Sign up for TIME FOR ACTION. It is easy to select an issue that moves you. State will provide information and calendars. To sign up simply go to www.LWVIL.org, and pull down the Take Action tab. Make a difference today!

National League Active!

The National League responds to federal legislation and decisions as they occur. The League’s actions range from issuing statements to calling for action. Here is a sampling of recent actions.


June 16, 2011 – Letter to legislators from President Elisabeth MacNamara opposing HR 672, which would terminate the Election Assistance Commission.

June 16, 2011 – LWV issued ACTION ALERT: Tell the President You Don’t Want to Breathe Smog. (Tell President Obama to fight for a strong smog standard to protect the health of all Americans, including those who are most vulnerable to air pollution -- our children and seniors.)

It is easy to sign up online to receive National Action Alerts. Go to www.LWV.org, Take Action tab. The National legislative watch list includes the following issues: CEDAW, Climate Change, Ethics, Immigration, Safe Drilling and Mining (“Fracking”).

HOW TO FOLLOW A FEDERAL BILL

To track any bill in Congress: go to www.govtrack.us

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Welcome to new members Vicki K. Douvlis, Susan Richardson and June Luvisi, all from Lake Forest. We’re glad you joined.

New Membership Affair

Where do you go in the Lake Forest area to meet people who are willing to wrangle over the intricacies of public affairs? As our League friend Diane used to say, “There are many organizations that call to my heart, but the League engages my mind.” If this describes you or your friends, come and bring them to the New Membership soirée in September. Watch for details!

Affordable Housing Update

The Housing Trust Fund Board has increased from 3 to 7, chaired by Mike Burns, and meets every second Tuesday from 7:00-9:00 a.m. Christa Donnelly and I have observed the last 2 months. However, we need help from those who can be early risers.

The board has heard the reports of what the hospital and Lake Forest College do to help their employees finance housing, and they have heard me reiterate the need for rentals for those already living in Lake Forest. It was suggested that the League or the City staff survey the city to see if there really is a need for affordable housing. Eight years ago this is what we were discussing with Mayor Preschlak. In reading Paula DuBourdieu’s LWVLF president’s letter of July 1985, I was interested that the League had surveyed the entire community to assess the housing needs of retirees and empty nesters then. Now 26 years later only five cottages have been built, primarily because of the leadership of Tom Tropp. More reports will be forthcoming, but don’t hold your breath that any affordable housing will be built soon. It is the diligence of the interested parties that keep this issue alive in Lake Forest.

Respectfully, Jane
Role of Federal Government in Public Education: League Study

Defining League Positions in Public Education

The importance of education for the common good has shifted from primarily local control to state and national control, with national attention from the Federal government and national organizations. Congress is currently embroiled in a debate and stalemate over the reauthorization of ESEA, the 2001 NCLB. Major issues include the purpose and role of the federal government in education, funding, and the extent to which the federal government should play a role in public education. Areas for national debate involve school choice, accountability, teacher quality, goals, standards and above all, funding. Federal funding currently averages about 10 percent of local school budgets.

During the coming year, local and state Leagues across the United States will discuss the role of the federal government in public education with the goal of coming to consensus on a number of questions.

The Education Study scope is broad and includes the following areas under the role of the federal government in public education (pre-K through grade 12): the history, funding and equity issues which are addressed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the common core standards/assessments which are required for many federal grant programs but are national, not federal. The culminating position will address only those issues delineated in the scope.

Where Are We Now?

The United States has changed dramatically since the early debates on the role of public schools and the role of the federal government in supporting and sustaining them.

In Memoriam

The LWV community lost a long-time member and former president with the death of Paula DuBourdieu on May 7th. Paula joined the League of Women Voters of Lake Forest in 1983 (this was before the Lake Forest and Lake Bluff Leagues merged) and served as secretary in 1983 and president in 1984-1986.

Paula packed a remarkable number of achievements into her term as president, including successfully lobbying for a study on Illinois public policy on mental health at the State convention almost single-handedly.

Paula’s husband, Dave, held a memorial service on June 18th that was a unique tribute to a unique life. LWV-LFLB provided a booklet of excerpts of Paula’s writing during her time on the board. Several League members attended the memorial.
Your brain has an engagement.

Engage your brain as well as your heart at our Fall Membership Event in September. Watch for details by mail and/or email. And be sure to check our website!

www.LWV-LFLB.org

A picture’s worth a thousand words - and we’ve got LOTS of pictures on our website, along with up-to-date information on what LWV-LFLB is doing.

Bookmark

www.LWV-LFLB.org

and stay in touch!