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Pros and Cons of calling an Illinois Constitutional Convention

President's Corner



Dear Leaguers,

As we enter this busy time of the year, here are a few dates worth planning for:

January 10, 2008- General membership meeting about whether to vote for a Constitutional Convention in Nov. 2008. Under the Illinois Constitution, every 20 years voters decide whether to open up the Illinois Constitution adopted on 1970. The state League will be asking local Leagues for their positions on this to try to reach a consensus position, so this could be your opportunity to learn.

January 24, 2008 - State League's Annual State of the State Luncheon. Lisa Madigan will be speaker.

February 14, 2008 - General membership meeting to review our local , state and national positions.

February 23, 2008 - Annual Issues Briefing by the State League on legislative issues for the upcoming year. This is a very informative event. There are usually some folks from our League going up so call me and we'll try to get you in touch with others. The Constitutional Convention question will be a prime topic.

You have all gotten a letter from the state League requesting end of the year donations. In your charitable giving, please remember the state (and local) League. We try to be frugal with your dollars but all expenses have increased. The League provides an irreplaceable non-partisan voice, and in these days of strident partisan mud-slinging, it is increasing valuable.

Trisha

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Should the state call a convention to revise the Illinois constitution? The present constitution, in place since 1970, requires that voters be asked this question every 20 years. When asked in 1988, the voters answered *no*. Should they vote *no* again next November, when the question will again appear on the ballot, or should they vote *yes*?

The January 10th general meeting of the League of Women Voters of Champaign County will provide voters a chance to consider the pros and cons of this issue. The speaker, Sam Gove, is especially well-qualified to discuss this subject with us. When the constitution was last revised, he was appointed by the governor to serve on the Constitution Study Commission and to chair the Constitution Implementation Commission. He is now retired as director of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois, and is a member and former president of LWVCC.

Gove will not take a position at the meeting either for or against calling a new constitutional convention. When asked for points on either side, he said that rewriting the constitution would give the state an opportunity to improve its taxing structure, but that more divisive issues, such as abortion and same sex marriage, could come up for debate, as well.

The meeting will be held at the Urbana City Council Chambers, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, on Thursday, January 10, 2008, at 12:00 noon. You can bring your brown bag lunch at 11:30.

The public is invited to attend. Parking is available in the metered spaces in the lots to the north and east of the city building, in the parking garage north of Lincoln Square Village, and along the streets.

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Voter Service

At the request of LWVIL, Deputy Registrars Sherry DeWan, Carole Rebeiz, Helen Satterthwaite and Sandy Volk registered voters at the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Headquarters on December 12 and 13. A total of 15 voters were either registered or made changes to their addresses.

LWVCC will not hold any candidate forums for the February primary, but look for forums in the fall before the November elections.

Peg Flynn, Voter Service Chair, 352-4114,
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More on 85 Years of LWVCC

Watch these pages for Premier Screening dates and places for the **LWVCC history DVD**. We hope to do this in late January or in February.

We now have the DVDs in hand and they have been reviewed by the 85th Anniversary Committee. We will schedule dates and places for film viewing - maybe even with popcorn! This will be time to reminisce and to learn even more about the wonders of the LWV in Champaign County.

See you there!

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From <http://www.lwv.org/>

Four Reform Groups Express Disappointment In Proposed New House Office Of Congressional Ethics And The Absence of any Investigatory Powers to Carry Out Its Responsibilities

Statement of Reform Groups:

Our organizations are very disappointed that the Office of Congressional Ethics (Office) proposed today by the Democratic Members of the House Ethics Task Force fails to provide the Office with either subpoena power or access to subpoena power through the House Ethics Committee. This basic flaw should be corrected.

The organizations include the Campaign Legal Center, Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters and Public Citizen.

Our groups have called for the establishment of a new independent, professional entity in Congress to assist the House Ethics Committee in enforcing the House ethics rules.

We believe such an entity is necessary to effectively respond to the complete breakdown of the House ethics enforcement process in the last Congress and to help ensure that the new House ethics rules are properly enforced.

Under the proposal for a new Office, which we have not yet had the opportunity to fully review, the Office is given the authority to make findings of fact regarding potential ethics matters and to recommend to the House Ethics Committee whether the matters should be investigated by the Committee.

The Office, however, is not given the powers that are needed to conduct effective fact-finding investigations. The Office is denied any form of subpoena power, the tool that is provided to every congressional Committee that conducts investigations.

Without subpoena power or access to subpoena power, the Office can be ignored in its efforts to interview individuals and obtain documents that may be central to the ethics matter at hand. The findings of fact by the Office, furthermore, are often likely to be limited to information that is already publicly available.

We recognize and appreciate the fact that the proposed new Office would provide, for the first time, a role for individuals outside of Congress in the process for enforcing the congressional ethics rules. Without investigatory powers to carry out its responsibilities, however, we are seriously concerned about the ability of the Office to effectively do its job.

We believe that it is not too late to address the problems caused by the failure to give the Office investigatory powers. We urge House Speaker Pelosi and the House Rules Committee to take the appropriate steps necessary to fix this basic problem by making in order and supporting an amendment to provide the new Office with subpoena power or access to subpoena power to carry out its responsibilities. We urge House members to support such an amendment.

Released: Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. -- Martin Luther King, Jr.

WIKIPE DIA

Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia - editable by anyone. This is some of what it says about the League

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Women_Voters

The League of Women Voters is an American political organization founded in 1920 by Carrie Chapman Catt during the last meeting of the National American Woman Suffrage Association approximately six months before the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution gave U.S. women the right to vote. It began as a "mighty political experiment" aimed to help newly-enfranchised women exercise their responsibilities as voters. Originally, only women could join the LWV; but in 1973 the charter was modified to include men. The LWV is a grassroots organization with chapters in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The LWV has approximately 150,000 members (as of 2006).

The LWV is nonpartisan, meaning it does not endorse or oppose political candidates or parties at any level of government. The LWV does support or oppose many political issues after studying them and coming to a consensus on a position. The LWV works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy, as well as through political lobbying of Congress.

The LWV is organized into two complementary halves: Voters Service and Citizen Education; and Program and Action.

"One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors." -- Plato

"A low voter turnout is an indication of fewer people going to the polls." -- Dan Quayle

"George Washington is the only president who didn't blame the previous administration for his troubles." -- Author Unknown

"In our brief national history we have shot four of our presidents, worried five of them to death, impeached one and hounded another out of office. And when all else fails, we hold an election and assassinate their character." -- P. J. O'Rourke

The following excerpts relating to the Illinois Constitution were found at these Wikipedia links:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Illinois

Richard Ogilvie, a Republican, won in 1968. Bolstered by large Republican majorities in the state house, Ogilvie embarked upon a major modernization of state government. He successfully advocated for a state constitutional convention, increased social spending, and secured Illinois' first state income tax. The latter was particularly unpopular with the electorate, and the modest Ogilvie lost a close election to the flashy Democrat Dan Walker in 1972. The state constitutional convention of 1970 wrote a new document that was approved by the voters. It modernized government and ended the old system of three-person districts which froze the political system in place.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illinois_State_Constitution

History

The first Illinois Constitution was adopted in 1818 when Illinois was admitted to the Union. Constitutional revisions were ratified in 1848, 1870 and 1970. Important features of the fourth Illinois Constitution include the creation of home rule powers for larger municipalities and other units of local government. The current version of the Illinois Constitution was adopted by special election on December 15, 1970.

In 1862 a constitutional convention was held, but the changes known as the "Copperhead constitution" were not ratified by the voters. A constitutional convention was held in 1920, but in 1922 the changes were rejected by voters.

Article XIV requires that Illinois voters be asked at least every 20 years if they desire a constitutional convention. 1988 was the last time that measure was put to a vote, so in 2008 Illinois voters will be asked if there is a need for a constitutional convention to revise the state constitution. In 1988 the measure failed 900,109 votes for and 2,727,144 against the measure. 1,069,939 other voters choose neither option.

"Poetry is about the grief. Politics is about the grievance."

-- Robert Frost

"New opinions often appear first as jokes and fancies, then as blasphemies and treason, then as questions open to discussion, and finally as established truths." -- George Bernard Shaw