

Looking Ahead - April

10 *General* Observer Reports, Part II

President's Corner



Dear Leaguers,

We have two meetings coming up that are close to our core missions of educating voters and promoting good government: the March & April Observer meetings. The March meeting is the usual place & time - Thursday March 13 at the Urbana City Building. April's meeting is also a second Thursday, but at 7 pm at Clark-Lindsay. The Champaign County League has the most active Observer program in the state thanks to the unflagging efforts of Mary Blair.

The LWVIL *Issues Briefing* was held on Saturday February 23 in Chicago. The major issue under discussion was the position the League should take on the Constitutional Convention question which will be on the November 2008 ballot in Illinois.

The current Illinois Constitution provides that voters must be asked every 20 years whether to call a constitutional convention. If Illinois does hold such a convention, everything will be on the table. Given the almost overwhelming frustration with what's happening in Springfield, there may be a temptation to vote for a constitutional convention on the grounds that things couldn't get worse. Rather than voting on emotion, however, we'd like to explore the facts.

The state League has asked local Leagues to come to consensus on this issue and to send the results to them by mid-April. In order to do this, we have scheduled a special meeting on March 27, 2008 at 7 pm at Clark-Lindsay.

We will show the DVDs from the 85th Anniversary celebration, originally scheduled for viewing on March 20, at some future date.

A packet of information from LWVIL for use in our consensus discussions is included with this *Voter*. A copy of it, and other links to helpful relevant Con-Con

information is also available on the state League website at www.lwvil.org/ConCon.asp. Google can surely find other views on the Internet also, so have at it.

Please come to the consensus meeting and add your voice to the issue.

Trisha

Trisha Crowley, 359-2514, tcrowley9491@gmail.com

2008 LWVIL Issues Briefing

from www.lwvil.org - includes links to reports

The Illinois League's Annual Issues Briefing was held on February 23. The morning program featured a discussion on The Pros and Cons of Having a Constitutional Convention. Illinois voters will vote on this issue in the General Election on November 4, 2008.

The afternoon session of the Briefing offered a choice of three workshops: Education Funding, Immigration, and Global Warming. Reports on other issues of special interest to the League were included in a folder given to everyone who attended the Briefing. Here are those reports:

- Campaign Finance Reform
- Children's Services
- Criminal Justice
- Death Penalty Abolition
- Election Laws
- Fiscal Policy
- Gun Violence Prevention
- Special Report on Illinois Courts
- Immigration
- Judicial Evaluation Commission
- Mental Health
- Omnibus Elections Bill
- Show Us Amendment
- Social Policy

Please bring the Con-Con insert in this *Voter* with you to the March 27 special meeting.

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General Meeting - March 13, 2008
Observer Corps Reports, first session

The Champaign County League of Women Voters assigns impartial observers to monitor and report on civic boards and commissions in Champaign County. The observers will present their yearly reports at the March and April League meetings. Each report will briefly highlight the major accomplishments and touch on important issues facing the boards. The public is welcome to attend.

The March 13, 2008 meeting will be at our regular noon time in the Urbana City Council Chambers and will be televised on UPTV cable channel 6. Observers in March will report on the following boards:

Champaign County:

County Board; Housing Authority; Mental Health Board; Regional Planning Commission; Parkland College

Champaign:

City Council; Library Board; Plan Commission; Board of Education-Unit 4

Urbana:

Historic Preservation Commission; Human Relations Commission

The second meeting with reports from our observers will be April 10th at 7:00 pm at Clark-Lindsey Village.

Attention Observers:

If you are presenting a report, please sit near the front and be prepared to come promptly to the podium following the report shown ahead of yours in the list above.

Bring to the meeting three copies of your report. One is for you, and two are for Mary Blair. One of those goes to the Observer file and the second to the President's file. Reports should be brief, one or two pages in length - an overview of the year, not a meeting by meeting account.

The reports on the two City Councils, two School Boards and the County Board will each be allotted 10 minutes of reading time. All others will be allowed 5 minutes each. Leonard Coburn will once again serve as timekeeper and will keep us on schedule.

Once more, thanks for your perseverance and dedication! I hope you are enjoying your stint as an observer.

P.S. for any former observer who still has an LWV "Observer" button: Please return the button to me for the use by some future observer.

Mary Blair, Observer Corps Chair, 367-0578

Showing of 85th Anniversary DVDs

We struck out with the weather in February and had to cancel, and will be replacing the scheduled March 20th viewing with our Con-Con consensus meeting. We will view these DVDs at some future date.

March 27 Special Meeting Coming to Consensus on Con-Con

The LWV Consensus Process

Consensus is the process the League uses to reach member agreement on study issues. It is neither a simple majority nor unanimity; instead, it is an overall sense of the group. In other words, consensus results from answers to questions on which members can find common ground and agreement. Group discussion that allows an exchange of ideas and opinions is the preferred way to achieve consensus, but local Leagues and ILO's may also choose to use questionnaires and email polls.

Please read the enclosed materials ahead of time, and come to our March 27 meeting to add your input to the consensus process. We hope to have good attendance.

If you cannot attend, you may express your views by mail, email or phone. Contact (by March 29):

Theresa Michelson
2013 Silver Court West, Urbana 61801
344-4078
thmichelson@yahoo.com

Please do try to come in person if you can.

SHOULD THERE BE A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION?

by Sharon Z. Alter, LWVIL Con-Con Study Committee Co-Chair

On Election Day November 2008, as required by the Illinois Constitution every 20 years, Illinois voters will vote on whether to have another state constitutional convention.

A convention will take place if voters give their approval either by a 3/5 majority of those voting on the question or by a majority of all voters in the election.

The issues to be considered at a state convention are to be determined by the delegates themselves at the convention. This means that neither the November 2008 voters nor the state legislators nor any elected executive or judicial officers can limit the state convention to a particular issue or issues or a limited number of issues.

As one considers how to vote in November 2008, it is very important for all Illinois voters to know that a constitution is the means by which the people give government the power to govern. In doing so, a constitution divides power among the various branches of government and among the levels of government while reserving certain powers and guaranteeing certain rights to the people.

While a constitution provides the basic government framework and guarantees basic individual rights, a constitution is not self-enforcing. Legislation is needed to provide the details and the enforcement powers.

If November 2008 Illinois voters were to approve having a constitutional convention, delegates to that convention could consider a wide spectrum of issues that include: (1) separation of church and state; (2) death penalty; (3) gun control; (4) abortion; (5) same sex marriage; (6) stem cell research; (7) definition of person; (8) term limits for elected officials; (9) recall of elected officials; (10) amendatory veto power of governor; (11) merit selection of state judges; (12) home rule; (13) eminent domain; (14) education funding; (15) graduated income tax.

If there were to be a state constitutional convention considering these and other issues, convention delegates could draft an entirely new state constitution and/or draft new constitutional amendments, all of which would be subject to ratification by Illinois voters. Ratification would occur with approval by a simple majority of those voting on the proposed constitution/amendment.

In the question of whether to support Con-Con, one must consider the extent of (1) the need to improve the Illinois Constitution, (2) the urgency to institute multiple reforms simultaneously, and (3) the potential to achieve piecemeal change through the current amendment process. Such a review must balance the anticipated benefits from rewriting specific articles by a convention against the potential risks involved in exposing the entire constitution to revision.

It is imperative that as many League members as possible participate in their local league consensus meetings which will be held between late February and early April. League members will consider their Con-Con positions with assistance from a study guide compiled by the 2007-8 LWVIL Con-Con Study Committee. Materials will also be available on the LWVIL web site after January 31, 2008. The LWVIL Issues Briefing on February 23, 2008 will include a session on Con-Con.

The Illinois Constitution can be found in The Handbook of Illinois Government available from the Illinois Secretary of State's office or online at ilga.gov.

*The above was included in the State Board Report ~ December, 2007, which can be found online at:
www.lwvil.org/SBRConConArticle120907.pdf*

Included was this note:

Please note that this article will be printed in the Illinois Voter that members will receive in January.