



BULLETIN

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WILMETTE

Contact us: LWV-Wilmette, P. O. Box 432, Wilmette, IL 60091

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lwwilmette.org

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November/December 2009

DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT

HOLIDAY PARTY



Sunday, December 6, 5 - 7 p.m.
The home of Jan and Carl Peterson
1049 Pontiac, Wilmette

Spouses and friends welcome!

R.S.V.P. Dorothy Speidel: d-speidel@northwestern.edu or 847-989-4716

Also a chance to share with others -- please bring paper goods for the New Trier Pantry

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the weather gets colder, things are heating up for the League. The year 2010 will mark many changes for us right here in Wilmette. Will a tax referendum pass to finance major renovations to New Trier's east campus? Who will be our new representatives in both the U.S. House and Illinois House? Watch for updates in your email inbox of these significant events:

New Trier Referendum: As of this writing, it is very possible there will be a tax referendum on the February 2 ballot for expansion and renovation of New Trier's Winnetka campus. We are hoping to conduct a study of the referendum, and could use the help of as many League members as possible to do an effective and thorough study. I am pleased to report that I have already heard from some of you expressing your interest in this endeavor. I will keep everyone posted as developments occur.

Candidate Forums: Also rising on the horizon are candidate forums for U.S. Representative of the 10th District (Mark Kirk's seat) and State Representative of the 18th District (Julie Hamos' seat). We have already secured a date and place for the State Representative-18th District candidate forum: 3:00 p.m., Sunday, January 10 at Evanston Township High School. We are awaiting confirmation of a place and time for the Tenth Congressional District candidate forum, and will alert all of you as soon as the details of this forum become available.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments regarding the League. I look forward to seeing many of you at our **Holiday Party** on Sunday, December 6.

Have a safe and healthy holiday season!

Therese

2009-2010 ELECTED OFFICERS

President	Therese Steinken
VP/Programs	Georgia Gebhardt
VP/Membership	Libby Bankoff
Treasurer	Susan Morrison
Secretary/Programs	Dorothy Speidel

2009-2010 ELECTED DIRECTORS

<i>Bulletin</i> Editor	Dale Cohodes
Publicity	Judy Mandel
	Jan Peterson
Student Government	Deena Mitchell
	Lali Watt
Voter Services	Heidi Voorhees
	Ellen Falkof
Web Master	Beth Nyhan

2010 NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Cinda Axley, Chair, Dorothy Speidel & Beth Nyhan

VOTER SERVICES UPDATE

New Trier Registration

Voter Registration at New Trier High School will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, November 10 and 11. Deputy Registrars will meet between 7:45 a.m. and 8 a.m. in the Advisery office at New Trier East High School in Winnetka and then proceed to senior adviseries to register new voters. Last year more than 200 seniors were registered! If you have not received an e-mail about participating, but would like to participate, please contact **Heidi Voorhees, Voter Services Co-Chair at 847-256-7299 or via e-mail at HeidiJVoorhees@aol.com**. You must have a current deputy registrar commission to register voters.

If your commission has expired you may renew it by filling out a form you can download from the Cook County Clerk's website voterinfonet.com. Click on Voter Registration, then Deputy Registrar. You will find the form to download. It takes just a few minutes to fill out and then you can mail it in to the Clerk's office.

Additional information about parking, the room number where we are meeting on November 10 and 11 will be sent out prior to November 10.

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 8 – "Votes for Women!" play – 2:00 pm – Ruth Page Theatre

NOVEMBER 9 & 10 – Register Voters at New Trier High School – 8:00 am

NOVEMBER 10 – Cook County Lunch & Learn, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm, DePaul University Center

NOVEMBER 20 - Board Meeting – 1:00 pm – home of Dorothy Speidel, 1535 Elmwood

DECEMBER 1 - United We Learn Presentation - 7:00 pm - Trinity United Methodist Church

DECEMBER 6 – Holiday Party – 5:00 – 7:00 pm – home of Jan Peterson, 1049 Pontiac

JANUARY 10 – Candidate Forum for 18th Dist. Reps – 3:00 p.m. - Evanston Township High School

APPLAUSE!! APPLAUSE!!

Many thanks should be extended to so many people who, on an ongoing basis, help to make our League strong and vibrant. However the following members deserve SPECIAL THANKS FOR STEPPING UP this past month:

GEORGIA GEBHARDT – for leading the book discussion of *Outliers: The Story of Success*

CAROLE LIEBSON – for hosting the legislative interview of Jeff Schoenberg in her home

LIBBY BANKOFF – for conducting the legislative interviews of Jeff Schoenberg and Elizabeth Coulson

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW: STATE SENATOR SCHOENBERG

On October 19, League members gathered at the home of Carole Liebson for an interview with Illinois Senator Jeff Schoenberg.

Mr. Schoenberg has served six two-year terms as an Illinois State representative and was elected to the Illinois Senate in 2002.

When asked about the state budget deficit, he made the following observations:

Pension reform: He spoke about pension reform noting that a 1995 law requires the State to make annual contributions to the pension fund but, at no time, did the amount correlate with actual need. According to Mr. Schoenberg, that law should have had an automatic trigger that would have required the State to put more in the pension fund in the years when revenues were at their most robust as in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Income Tax Reform: Mr. Schoenberg voted against an income tax increase in May. The Senate bill would have made a 67% permanent increase (from 3% to 4.5%). He felt it was too big, too broad and too permanent. It should have been an increase for two years or it should have had a sunset clause. He feels we need a reduction in spending as much as an increase in revenue.

Other revenue sources: Mr. Schoenberg was the chief sponsor of legislation to raise the cigarette tax and make the funds eventually available for financial aid for college students. It passed the Senate and may pass the house in January (when only a simple majority will be needed).

League members asked about possible additional revenues from the lottery and from internet sales. The legislature is already working on increasing the state percentage from the lottery. Internet sales? Illinois has voted to study it but not yet to participate in pushing for this (other states have). Mr. Schoenberg was asked if this is a good idea. His reply: yes and no. It would generate funds but perhaps we should let the technology sector mature more.

Redistricting: In Illinois, a redistricting committee is formed made up of an equal number of Democrats and Republicans. The final member of the committee, the tie-breaking vote, is determined by drawing a party name out of a hat. Then that party chooses the final member! Should we use the Iowa computer-generated model? Mr. Schoenberg warned that would hurt minorities in Illinois.

What's up for 2010?: Campaign Finance Reform, Contracts Reform. On campaign finance reform, there is agreement on 9 out of 10 issues and the situation has gotten better over the years: there are caps on contributions from individuals and better real-time reporting. We need to cap what the leadership committee can give (Mr. Schoenberg is ambivalent). This probably won't happen. On contracts reform, Mr. Schoenberg noted that Illinois has the toughest laws on penalties for paying for sweetheart deals on bond issues and on the failure to disclose contributions. Illinois does not have good tools, however, to evaluate contractors.

A League member asked if elected officials are paying their correct taxes. Per Mr. Schoenberg, some make their tax returns public - it's voluntary.

Thanks to Carole for hosting and thanks to those who brought goodies!

Dorothy Speidel

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW: STATE REPRESENTATIVE COULSON

On October 23, League members met with Illinois Representative Elizabeth Coulson in her legislative office in Glenview.

Campaign Finance Reform: Ms. Coulson has been in office over thirteen years and she considers this reform one of her priorities. She and colleagues are trying gradually to clean up the system. Some reforms have been passed but there is a long way to go. The Speaker of the House is looking at a bill now that would increase the power of his office. This House bill uses federal limits for the state, which is a good idea, but Ms. Coulson will vote against giving any Speaker more power (pending seeing the final bill). The Senate bill may come up as early as Wednesday. Per Ms. Coulson, the Senate bill needs more amendments.

Income Tax Reform: Ms. Coulson voted against the budget calling for an income tax increase. She noted that she received only six calls from people wanting the increase and many calls from those opposed. The budget bill did not protect Health and Human Services and Education, two things she cares most about.

Health Care Reform: She is an advocate for Medicaid patients having a “medical home” (similar to a primary doctor). It would save money and result in better care. She also favors “disease management” – now Medicaid provides disease management for asthma and diabetes, Ms. Coulson would like to see it extended to include management of high-blood pressure and cardiac care and believes this would bring about considerable savings.

Budget Deficit: Ms. Coulson supported and voted for the “prompt pay” bill for vendors. She feels that, if an agency had to borrow money to meet payroll, the state should reimburse the agency for interest paid on the loan. She noted that the federal stimulus bill required states to “catch up” on payments to hospitals and nursing homes. They have deep pockets and, she implied, could cope with their problems. But smaller agencies suffered greatly – might have to cut services or even shut down.

Pension Reform: Ms. Coulson noted that there are some pensions guaranteed by the Illinois constitution (teachers, for example) . Both political parties have been guilty of pushing back payments to the pension fund and no money has been set aside for the last two years. Still all pensions will be paid. A bill was passed in 1995 which means that a large balloon payment will be due soon.

Education Funding Reform: Ms. Coulson does not favor a tax swap (a lower real estate tax for a higher income tax). The tax swap was done in Michigan and schools have had less money every year. Income tax is not as stable as real estate tax. Ms. Coulson would like to see more federal funding for special education. She noted that one federal program, Tax Increment Financing (TIFS), have taken away funds from schools.

On equity funding for education, she said that downstate schools are hurt the most but also have a lower cost of living. Apparently she feels that we don't have a good way to measure need.

Redistricting: Ms. Coulson favors the Iowa computer-generated plan. In Illinois, a bi-partisan committee may be set up. She would like to see a computer model done for Illinois and see if this committee supports it.

Dorothy Speidel