



BULLETIN

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WILMETTE

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League of Women Voters
of Wilmette

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DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT

Please join us at the LWV of Wilmette's

Annual Holiday Party

December 12, 2010

At the home of Sarah and Wally Oliver

110 Broadway, Wilmette

4 - 6 p.m.

Spouses and friends welcome!



RSVP to Beth Nyhan

bethnyhan@gmail.com or 847-251-1745

This is also a chance to share with others in need. Please bring donations for the New Trier Food Pantry. Current priority items are 1) cookies and crackers (a number of families with children use these items for school lunches), 2) cereal, 3) cooking oil, 4) laundry detergent, and 5) large bottles of shampoo and conditioner. The latter items cannot be purchased with food stamps.

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

After an active fall of campaign forums, voter registration, and our annual League of Student/Government Leaders program, Thanksgiving was just what we needed. If you are enjoying the absence of hundreds of campaign ads, I'm sure you are not alone!

There will be plenty more to come in 2011, but for now, it's time to bring out the holiday glitz and celebrate the season at the Holiday Party on December 12 (4-6pm). Sarah Oliver's home (110 Broadway) is the place. Details, as always, can be found on the front page of this *Bulletin* as well as on our website at www.lwvwilmette.org.

And the reviews are in for the first of our programs on "What Is the (Ideal) Role of Government?" If we had any doubts about the interest in this topic, they were put to rest on November 18 at the library when 72 (yes, seventy-two) people came to hear Professor William G. Howell of the University of Chicago speak on "Solving Social Problems: The Case for a More Powerful Presidency." The audience was totally engaged and left wanting to meet again and to hear more on a topic that has dominated political discourse since the founding of the nation. Thank you to Chair, Libby Bankoff, and her stellar committee for developing this provocative program!

Our busy schedule resumes with the New Year. Look for opportunities to participate in two League studies (one national issue, one local), voter registration at local high schools, the Voters' Guide for the village election, and the LWV State convention, which North Shore Leagues will be co-hosting in June.

Finally, the Board sends warm wishes for a happy, safe holiday season!

SEE YOU AT THE HOLIDAY PARTY AT SARAH'S ON DECEMBER 12!

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Administrative Director/Treasurer
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JANUARY 18, 2011 MOVIE NIGHT WITH THE LWV

In celebration of the 90th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment to the Constitution, the Wilmette LWV will be showing the critically acclaimed movie, **"Iron Jawed Angels"** at the Wilmette Theatre in downtown Wilmette.

League members, friends, family (especially daughters) are all invited to this private showing at **7:00 p.m.** on **Tuesday, January 18, 2011.** The cost of admission is \$5.00 and includes a free (small) bag of popcorn.



The movie, "Iron Jawed Angels" tells the remarkable and little-known story of a group of passionate and dynamic young women, led by Alice Paul (Hilary Swank) and her friend Lucy Burns (Frances O'Connor), who put their lives on the line to fight for American women's right to vote.

Swank and O'Connor head an outstanding female ensemble, with Julia Ormond, Molly Parker, Laura Fraser, Brooke Smith and Vera Farmiga as a rebel band of young women seeking their seat at the table; and such cinematic icons as Lois Smith, Margo Martindale, and Anjelica Huston as the steely older generation of suffragettes.

August 2010 marked the 90th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment to the Constitution. The amendment guarantees all American women the right to vote. Achieving this milestone required a lengthy and difficult struggle; victory took decades of agitation and protest. Beginning in the mid-19th century, several generations of woman suffrage supporters lectured, wrote, marched, lobbied, and practiced civil disobedience to achieve what many Americans considered a radical change of the Constitution. Few early supporters lived to see final victory in 1920.

The League of Women Voters was founded in the spirit of the suffrage movement.

In her address to the National American Woman Suffrage Association's (NAWSA) 50th convention in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1919, President Carrie Chapman Catt proposed the creation of a league of women voters to "finish the fight" and aid in the reconstruction of the nation. And so, a League of Women Voters was formed within NAWSA, composed of the organizations in the states where woman suffrage had already been attained.

The next year, on February 14, 1920, six months before the 19th amendment to the Constitution was ratified, the League was formally organized in Chicago as the National League of Women Voters. Catt described the purpose of the new organization:

"The League of Women Voters is not to dissolve any present organization but to unite all existing organizations of women who believe in its principles. It is not to lure women from partisanship but to combine them in an effort for legislation which will protect coming movements, which we cannot even foretell, from suffering the untoward conditions which have hindered for so long the coming of equal suffrage. Are the women of the United States big enough to see their opportunity?"

Calendar

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| December 12 | Holiday Party, at the home of Sarah Oliver, 4:00-6:00 p.m. |
| January 18 | Board Meeting, Wilmette Public Library Meeting Room, 1:00 p.m. |
| January 18 | "Iron Jawed Angels" at The Wilmette Theatre, 7:00 p.m. |

LEAGUE OF STUDENT AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS

"The government that has the most impact on *you* is your local government," said Mr. Christopher Canning, the president of Wilmette's village board. So it came as no surprise when he jumped to be a part of Wilmette's League of Student and Government Leaders program.

The program was designed to help eighth grade students from different schools learn about their local governments. It includes students from Marie Murphy School, St. Joseph School, St. Francis Xavier School, and Wilmette Junior High School. A six-week long program takes students through government meetings, instructions on Robert's Rules of Order, and mock board meetings. In just one of the four groups, there were over 17 students.

This program was intended to teach students about their own local governments, and (hopefully) cure any misconceptions they may have. Sam Braganco, who was paired up with board president Mr. Canning, said that he knew very little about the local government before entering the program. "I always thought that the federal government was way more important," he admitted. "They make the really major laws that you follow. I always thought that local government was just this little branch of the Federal government." Sam went on to say that by the end of the program, he understood why it was in place. He acknowledged how much the local government does for you- clears your streets, makes sure you have water, runs the ambulances, and keeps everyone safe



Photo courtesy of the Wilmette Beacon

"I really got into the role," said Monica Schweitz, who was on the Village Board, and represented Public Works Director Donna Jakubowski during the mock board meeting. "I researched how much the local government does, and it really blew my mind." All of the members of the program reported an amazing new insight into local governments, be they village, school, park district or library. By pairing up every student with a person on a different level of the government, all the students learned something new and unique to their position- and then were able to share that information at the mock board meetings.

The mock board meetings, publicly televised, were the center point of the program. Each student brought what they had learned to the table and laid it out for the others to see- and then make a decision on. The village government meeting focused on deciding a budget for Wilmette for the next year, and undoubtedly, none of the participants will ever look at a dump truck the same way again.

"We learned so much useful [information]," said one board member. "Robert's Rules of Order, Parliamentary Procedure, all that. [it'll be really useful later on in life!]" And hopefully it will- especially if this program helps drive the students into a career in government, just as it did for Mr. Christopher Canning.

This article was by Jordan Rubin-McGregor, 8th grader at the Wilmette Junior High School. She had the role of reporter attached to the Village Board and was mentored by Joe Coughlin, Editor of the Wilmette Beacon.

LWV-COOK COUNTY

“They Are the Guardians of Our Most Cherished Democratic Ideals”

This is how Cook County Public Defender Abishi C. Cunningham, Jr. (retired Judge) described the people who work in the Public Defender’s Office at the November 15 *Lunch & Learn with the League* sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Cook County. But far too often, public defenders face questions such as “Why would you want to be part of that group?” and “How can you sleep at night?” when they are in social settings.

Judge Cunningham told the Lunch & Learn audience that fortunately for the people of Cook County, the people who work in the Public Defender’s Office are dedicated to the cause of making sure the legal system works, and they truly feel they have a calling. As a result, there is an amazingly low rate of turnover in the slightly over 700-person office that, besides attorneys, includes other professional and support staff, such as investigators. (Note that this total number is dramatically down from the 840 FTE positions in the years 2000-2004.) Many have been employed in the Office for 30 or more years.

The mission of the Office is to protect the rights and dignity of each person accused of a crime. Public Defenders are appointed by judges to represent those accused of a crime who cannot afford a private attorney. The staff works out of the Criminal Courts building at 26th and California (which members of the Cook County League toured several months ago) and the five suburban Cook County court houses and Juvenile Court. There is also a 37-member Elite Homicide Unit that defends indigent people accused of capital crimes, along with an Appellate Unit and a Forensic Science Division.

Audience members were surprised to learn that the Public Defender’s Office has to pay for its own evidence tests, as well as ballistic and other experts. Where does the money come from? Us the taxpayers: mainly from Cook County government, though the State of Illinois also is supposed to supply the money for the Capital Litigation Trust to cover the costs of murder cases. However, as further evidence of the problems with State

finances, the State is in arrears from 2009 and has paid nothing toward the amount owed for fiscal year 2010. (The County is covering the shortfall in the meantime.)

Judge Cunningham applauded the League for its efforts to repeal the death penalty. Aside from the moral issues, he stressed that there were millions of dollars more that are being spent on cases involving the death penalty that could be saved or spent more wisely to improve the justice system. Further, it costs the State of Illinois (and therefore the taxpayers) far more to pursue the death penalty than to house convicted murderers for life without parole.

Judge Cunningham, son of the first African American lawyer in West Virginia, was appointed by the President of Cook County to serve a 6-year term as the Public Defender in 2009. From 1986 until that time, he served as a judge in the Cook County Circuit Court, handling both criminal and civil cases. He has also had two separate stints in the State’s Attorney’s Office, as well as working in private practice and as an adjunct professor at both the DePaul and John Marshall Schools of Law. Judge Cunningham proudly told the audience that his sister is the presiding judge in the 6th district at Markham.

Lunch & Learn with the League is a series of fundraisers featuring speakers talking about different aspects of Cook County government. Proceeds are used to help pay for the operations of the League of Women Voters of Cook County, to which you, as a member of a local League within Cook County, automatically belong. Look for e-mail announcements for the spring *Lunch & Learn* early in 2011. And remember, you don’t need to be a League member to attend.

Like to learn more about the Cook County Public Defender’s Office? LWVCC member Pris Mims recommends reading *Defending the Damned* by journalist Kevin Davis from 2007.