



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF EVANSTON

THE INTERCOM

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2010

LWVE Producing Full Slate of Candidate Forums

by Nancy Bashook & Judy Hoffman



This election season is one of the busiest in years for Evanston, with contested races for Cook County Commissioner, State Representatives, and U.S. House. We are working in partnership with the other Leagues served by these offices, including

Chicago, Glenview, Glencoe, Park Ridge, Wilmette, and Winnetka–Northfield–Kenilworth.

The presentation of non-partisan candidate forums is a rarity and something our communities depend on from the League of Women Voters. We encourage our members to attend, bring neighbors, and promote the events via word-of-mouth, e-mail and social media. Event details are on the LWVE website calendar.

It takes more than a village to produce candidate forums, and many volunteers are needed for the October events. If you are interested, please support our work by notifying the coordinators of your interest ASAP. Event details to the right.

17th Legislative District

Sunday, September 26, 2:00 pm (doors open 1:30)

Wilmette Village Hall, 1200 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette

Parking lot on west side of building and all surrounding streets

Candidates: Daniel Biss (D), Hamilton Chang (R)

Coordinator: Dorothy Speidel (Wilmette)
d-speidel@northwestern.edu

13th Cook County / 18th Legislative District

Sunday, October 3, 2:00 pm (doors open 1:30)

Beth Emet The Free Synagogue, 1224 Dempster, Evanston

Parking: west side of building and all surrounding residential streets

2:00-3:00: 13th Cook County Commissioner

Candidates: Larry Suffredin (D), Linda Thompson LaFianza (R)

Green Party candidate **George Milkowski** was invited, but not available to participate on this date.

3:30-4:30: 18th Legislative District

Candidates: Robyn Gabel (D), Steve Funk (L-write-in)

Coordinator: Nancy Bashook
nbashook@gmail.com, 847-733-1750

9th Congressional District

Sunday, October 10, 2:00 pm (doors open at 1:30)

Niles North High School Auditorium, 9800 N. Lawler, Skokie

Parking on north side of building, at Old Orchard Rd.

Candidates: Jan Schakowsky (D), Joel Pollak (R)

Coordinator: Judy Hoffman
judhof@aol.com, 847-491-6275

Blagojevich Impeachment Sparks Recall Amendment

In the wake of the impeachment of former Governor Rod Blagojevich, the Illinois General Assembly adopted legislation to put the Illinois Governor Recall Amendment on the November ballot. The proposed constitutional amendment would allow voters to recall the governor. The proposed amendment stipulates that, before a petition to recall can be circulated, at least 20 state representatives and 10 state senators, equally balanced from each party in each chamber, sign a notice of intent to recall the governor.

The Evanston LWV will sponsor an informational meeting on the pros and cons of the proposed amendment on **Thursday, October 21, at 7:00 p.m.** at the Evanston Civic Center. The speaker in favor of the amendment will be **Senator Susan Garrett**. Speaking against will be **Representative Barbara Flynn Currie**.

In order for the amendment to be adopted, 60 percent of voters must approve the measure.

President's Letter

Courage is defined in *The American Heritage Dictionary* as: "the state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger with self-possession, confidence, and resolution; bravery."

In the early 1960's there was considerable promotion of John F. Kennedy's book *Profiles in Courage*. Could I even begin to appreciate it at the time? Apparently not, since life at that point for me didn't require acts of bravery or tenacity. Years later, I was having a conversation with a faculty member at MIT describing what I perceived to be a challenging living situation. As I spoke, he periodically simply said the word "courage" and not much else. The point was made and I never forgot the tone of that conversation.

Today people step out on a line and demonstrate courage in a vast array of circumstances. Being a leader requires unlimited courage, and being an elected government official goes right to the heart of the matter. To stand up for your own opinion in the face of the opposition and sometimes your own colleagues can and does deter many from letting their heart reveal their honest opinion.

Why should this be the case?

Voting is an act of courage. Speaking out and making your opinion known is an act of courage that resonates with the public at large. On the local blogs, individuals speak anonymously and that is tantamount to simply venting one's spleen. It demonstrates no courage.

On August 7 we stood tall at the Farmer's Market as we shared our common experiences as members of our League. Betty Hayford and Karen Hunt were visible examples of courage when they were verbally accosted by an individual who could only find fault with the League (referring to our organization as the League of Women Vipers). On August 27, we heard from our state legislators during our Legislative Luncheon. Representative Lou Lang from Skokie made a distinct reference to how many politicians in Illinois today will say one thing in a private conversation, yet when it comes time to vote their conscience, lack the necessary courage to vote for fear of what their constituents would think.

This is how things are shaping up as we begin our year of learning more about the Evanston city budget and foreclosures in Evanston. If you are a newer member of our League, you may be feeling your own lack of courage. You joined the League because you wanted to become more informed, and with all of the different activities in our League, you may continually wonder "how can I become more involved?" We certainly want to encourage everyone to rise to the occasion when inspiration says "*This is something I care about,*" or "*I want to learn more,*" please contact me at seblack451@gmail.com, if you want to become more involved. The opportunities are numerous and your personal courage is there, just waiting to be recognized.

Warm regards for a fantastic fall season,
Susan



League of Women Voters of Evanston

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THE INTERCOM

September - October 2010

THE INTERCOM is the newsletter of the
League of Women Voters® of Evanston.

Lawmakers Report to the League at Legislative Luncheon

— by Gloria Callaci

The LWVE annual Legislative Luncheon was held on August 27 at the Evanston Unitarian Church. Illinois House Deputy Majority Leader Lou Lang, Senate Assistant Majority Leader Jeff Schoenberg and Representative Robyn Gabel reported on the spring legislative session and what to expect in the fall veto session. All agreed that the budget problems for Illinois will continue, with reduced revenues caused by the recession and the ending of federal stimulus funds. Currently Illinois has an operating deficit of \$13 billion and growing.

The Illinois pension systems continue to be a problem even though both houses passed and the Governor signed a massive overhaul of the pension system. This bill limited the number of pensions one person could have and the maximum salary a pension is based on. It allows public bodies to have a two-tier system with all new employees receiving a different type of pension from the current system. However, because this change affects only new employees, its full impact will not be reflected in the state budget for several years.

Representative Lang discussed his sponsorship of the capital bill supporting construction projects and the positive effect of spending \$32 billion on infrastructure, creating jobs as well as improvements. He has also chaired a job-development task force



Left to right: Rep. Lou Lang, LWV President Susan Black, Rep. Robyn Gabel, Sen. Jeff Schoenberg

spring session. She was pleased to vote for bills that reformed the way Illinois protects nursing home residents and that created a better screening method for hepatitis and HIV at nursing facilities. Other bills she supported involved ethics reforms to limit campaign contributions, reform of the way McCormick Place does business and the extension of property tax relief to homeowners.

All three speakers agreed that the reductions in education spending constitute a serious problem to be addressed in the veto session. Fortunately, recent federal education spending will help improve Illinois schools. Other common points were the need to deal with pension reform and to generate more revenue for Illinois. The fall veto session, which will take place after the November election, should be a busy period focusing on the state's growing budget issues.

to improve the quality of jobs available in Illinois.

Senator Schoenberg reviewed his legislation stabilizing the Medicaid program by capturing more federal funds and speeding up the payment cycle for providers. Medicaid is one of the largest items in the state budget.

Representative Gabel described what it was like to be the newest member of the General Assembly during the hectic days of the

Evanston's Pension Dilemma

— by Betty Hayford

Pension shortfalls are frequently in the headlines these days, most often the state pension crisis, but also the dilemma faced by Evanston in funding pensions for the city's fire fighters and police officers. As the City Council begins to search for solutions, the League of Women Voters is considering how to inform our members about the issue.

On September 13, the City Council heard from Josh Rauh, associate professor at Northwestern's Kellogg School and an expert on public pensions. The core issue is that pension obligations are established by state law, and currently much of the pension lia-

bility is unfunded. According to a recent audit, both the police and firefighter funds are less than 50 percent funded, and the total unfunded liability might be almost \$175 million. State law requires the pensions be fully funded by 2033, which would require massive contributions of city funds that are presently not available in the city budget. As reported in the Evanston Roundtable on September 15, Dr. Rauh told the Council, "If we do nothing to correct this we will be paying \$45 million annually in pension obligations in a few decades." In addition, said Dr. Rauh, the government accounting standards (GASB) are flawed, masking the full pension liability. Although the total of unfunded liabilities looks like it is

about \$176 million that amount is really between \$300 million and \$400 million. He added that part of the problem was that the municipalities, including Evanston, were making annual contributions to the pension funds based on the recommendations of actuaries, "not economists."

Some have argued that Evanston needs to find the money to meet the pension obligations, while others have proposed seeking help from the Illinois legislature to amend the pension laws and reduce our obligations. League members will want to understand the consequences of either approach, and

continued on page 5



State of the Lakes:

Lake Michigan LWV Annual Meeting Agenda

The Lake Michigan League of Women Voters will hold its Annual Meeting Friday and Saturday, October 8 & 9, 2010, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Friday's program includes a visit to the Point Beach Energy Center followed by dinner and keynote speaker Phillip Moy, Invasive Species Specialist.

Following breakfast on Saturday, Manitowoc Mayor Justin Nickels will address the group about the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. The general membership meeting will follow. Lunch will include a talk by Jim Knickelbine, Director of Woodland Dunes. The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn, 4601 Calumet Avenue, Manitowoc.

The Lake Michigan LWV includes all local and state Leagues in the Lake Michigan Water Basin: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin. The program of LMLWV is based upon the Natural Resources positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States as they relate to environmental issues affecting the Lake Michigan basin and surrounding states. It is committed to the preservation and protection of Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes.

If you are interested in attending the Lake Michigan LWV annual meeting, contact Susan Black at seblack451@gmail.com or check the web site: www.lmlwv.org. *Space is limited and reservations are required.* Registration fee and one night hotel accommodations will be reimbursed by LWVE.

Did you know? The Great Lakes constitute 20 percent of the world's fresh water supply – reason aplenty to protect and preserve this important natural resource.

LMLWV Urges Participation in Climate Action Day

Here's a bulletin from LMLWV co-president Judy Johnston: October 10, 2010 (10/10/10) has been designated as the *Day of Climate Action*, a specific time to draw our attention to global climate change. The League of Women Voters is one of many national organizations participating in this effort. It is imperative that we collectively and individually do all we can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the waste of vital

resources including clean water, energy resources, forests, prairies and other open lands."

For more information and ideas on what individuals and organizations can do, visit: www.lwv.org and click on "Join in urging action against climate change" and "Toolkit for climate change" and 350.org for more on the background and worldwide effort.

LWVE Calendar of Events

All programs are free unless otherwise noted. For more information, call 847-866-7844 or visit Calendar updates at: www.lwve.org

Candidate Forums for Nov 2 Elections:

17th Legislative District

Sunday, September 26, 2:00 pm (doors open 1:30)
Wilmette Village Hall, 1200 Wilmette Ave, Wilmette
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Niles North High School Auditorium, 9800 N. Lawler, Skokie. Parking: north side of building, at Old Orchard Rd.
Candidates: Jan Schakowsky (D), Joel Pollak (R)

Thursday, October 21, 7:00 pm Community Forum On Governor Recall Ballot Referendum

Susan Garrett, State Senator
Barbara Flynn Currie, Majority Leader, IL General Assembly
Evanston Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, Evanston

Monday, November 15, 12 noon Post-Election Wrap Up

Jim Kenney, Executive Director of Common Ground
Gio's, 1631 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, Cost \$20

RSVP's help us plan. Please call **847.866.7844**
to reserve your spot for November 15th luncheon

identify ways to keep Evanston solvent while we consider steps to begin to address this long-term responsibility. Because the League has decided to consider Evanston city budget concerns in this year's local program priorities, we will want to examine the pension situation along with other budget issues.

The Monthly Event working group will be scheduling a session on pension issues later this year. Members who would like to be involved in planning this event should contact Elizabeth Kinney, Coordinator of Monthly Events: ekinney56@sbcglobal.net.

Welcome New LWVE Members: Gwendolyn Burton-Poole & Robyn Gabel
 Have you renewed your membership yet? Renew online at www.lwve.org
 or call 847-866-7844 to have membership form mailed to you.
 Watch for our new web site coming soon!



Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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LWVE News Briefs:

League Promotes Membership with Farmer's Market Shoppers

Saturday, August 7 was a perfect Saturday morning for shopping for meats, vegetables and flowers and our reliable corps of volunteers was out in force at the Evanston Farmer's Market. We handed out a directory of elected officials along with information on membership and upcoming programs. Special thanks to Michelle and Dan Jordan for providing the table and chairs and to our volunteers: Karen Telser, Jennifer O'Neil, Betty Hayford and Karen Hunt. (See Susan Black's letter on Page 2 for a "profile in courage" about two of our volunteers.)



Registering Voters for the Fall Elections

Our deputy registrars are busy as we look ahead to the November election. The LWV of Evanston registered voters at the Evanston Public Library on September 11, and will be there again on Saturday, September 25 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, and Saturday, October 2 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. We will also be registering voters at the assisted living facilities and at Evanston Township High School.

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Observer Wrapup

- by Jan Otwell

League Observers are our 'eyes and ears' at City Council, school board meetings, and the myriad committees, boards and commissions that set priorities and policy for our community. If you'd like to learn more about the nitty-gritty of local government, being a League Observer is a good way to start! Contact Jessica Feldman if you are interested in joining our Observer Corps. Yes, you can watch it on cable, but being there is much more interesting!

The fall brings the beginning of the budget planning season, a little earlier this year than last, since the City is changing its fiscal year to a calendar year from one beginning in March. Citizens have an opportunity for input on Wed., Sept. 29 at the Levy Center, 7 pm. The City Council itself will have a goal setting session at its meeting on Sept. 20. League observers will be at the City Council meetings during the fall as the aldermen work to finalize the budget by Thanksgiving. The Mayor's Budget Task Force, on which the League has a member, will meet Sept. 21.

While the summer had fewer meetings for the aldermen, for the most part the work went on as usual. Here are some of the highlights of activity since the last issue of the *Intercom*:

Pensions: The Pensions Council approved the actuarial recommendations for funding pensions. Staff had compared Evanston with 11 other communities, all of which make different assumptions. Evanston in the past has seemed to be optimistic on wage rates, investment income and life span, but the new report tends to be more conservative. Nevertheless, Evanston is falling further behind and looks to Springfield for some statewide relief. A presentation on pensions was scheduled for Sept. 13 by Dr Josh Rauh, Associate Professor in the Kellogg School of Management. Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl is hoping the League members will spread the word to help educate the community.

Townships: Aldermen met as Township Trustees for a brief meeting July 26 to pass the budget. Vote was 8-1 with Trustee Ann Rainey voting no. At the Human Services Committee Sept. 6, Ald. Fiske expressed her desire to explore the possibility of making the Township more efficient and cost effective. Despite the fact that the trustees have limited ability to change anything, they continued their effort. During the same meeting, the Township Assessor gave a report on the appeals process during this triennial assessment when hundreds of taxpayers have had their questions answered.

Mobile Foods Vehicle: A very persuasive argument was made at one of the Human Services Committees to support an ordinance amendment to permit a Mobile Food Vehicle to operate in Evanston. The idea is to bring food and food preparation to parts of Evanston where there is no other option for obtaining food. The vehicle would have to be owned and operated by the owner of a licensed restaurant in the city. Pros and cons were discussed, but no final decision was reached. Ald. Holmes moved to send this matter to the City Council without further clarification. At the City Council meeting the following week, Ald. Rainey moved to suspend the rules so that one vehicle could begin operation. Ald. Fiske had some objections and this matter was held over.



Josh Rauh, Associate Professor in the Kellogg School of Management. See article page 4. Photo courtesy of Evanston Photographic

Branch Libraries: The Evanston Library Board, spurred on by the public support for additional funding for the branches, has voted to develop its own independent budget and taxing power. At one of the City Council meetings this summer, Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl invited the Library Board members to meet with the Council before one of the Council meetings to see if they could reach some compromise on funding and relieve some of the tension within the community. *[Editor's note: this meeting took place on Sept. 13 and League Observers were there!]*

Recreation (special CC meeting) A special City Council meeting was held July 19 to take a look at the City's special events and its youth program. Both come under the purview of the recreation department headed by Doug Gaynor. After reviewing the City's special events, the Aldermen felt they could plan more of these if there was more funding in the budget. City Manager Wally Bobkiewicz announced he was hiring a development director who would be on board by September. On the matter of youth programs, Gaynor reviewed those in his own department as well as those in Community Development, in the Police Department and in the Public Library. In a response to a question by Ald. Jean-Baptiste, who has had a long time interest in these programs, Gaynor said his Department is working with the Cook County Sheriff's office with incarcerated youth two months before their release.

Boards and Commissions Study: Discussion continued on recommendations of the Task Force on Boards and Commissions, specifically on whether to combine Playground and Recreation, Ladd Arboretum and the Lighthouse committees. It was decided to hold this decision over until February. However, another recommendation of the Task Force relating to operating procedures has been accepted and templates are being developed for agendas, minutes and annual reports. Each committee will be able to directly post these. And an orientation packet is being developed in two parts—one general for all boards and committees and one specific to each committee's responsibilities.

Varsity Theater: The Vice Chair of the task force on the Varsity Theater gave an update at one of the August Council meetings. He reported that plans were to renovate the building and turn the second floor into a performing and visual arts floor. The task force will come back with specific recommendations in February.

League of Women Voters® of Evanston

2100 Ridge Avenue in Evanston, IL 60201



September - October 2010

Candidate Forums.....	1
Recall Amendment.....	1
President's Letter.....	2
LWVE 2010-11 Board & Information.....	2
Legislative Luncheon Report.....	3
Pension Dilemma.....	3
Calendar of Events.....	4
State of the Lakes.....	4
Climate Action Day.....	4
Membership News.....	5
LWVE Mission Statement.....	5
News Brief: Farmer's Market.....	6
News Brief: Register to Vote.....	6
Observer Wrapup.....	7

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