Letter from the President, August 2020

Dear League members and friends of the League,

On August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment was ratified and after almost a century of protest, women won gender equity at the ballot box.

A century later, in the shadow of a global pandemic, we are still fighting for equitable access to the ballot for all people, while the inequities faced by many in our country have become impossible to ignore. So much of the League’s work is rooted in social justice - and today we find our work more vital to the health of representative democracy than ever before.

I ask all of you to embrace this moment in history as a moment of personal accountability. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to use their vote. We can all agree that a country wracked by sickness and protest is not a country to our liking. Whatever change we believe in, we have the right to make those beliefs known at the ballot box.

The LWVIL is staunchly nonpartisan, but we are avowedly political. Our mission is to educate and engage - to promote civic responsibility by encouraging people to be informed and hold their legislators accountable. Voting is our voice in the political process.

Standing on the cusp of our second century during this crucial election year, it seems profoundly fitting that LWVIL celebrates our centennial with a virtual benefit designed to inspire us all to Power the Vote.

In the words of the late John Lewis, “The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.”

Join us - we need your support. Be accountable. Make your effort count. Help Power the Vote.
Mask up, be safe, stay well.

Allyson E. Haut, Ph.D.
President
League of Women Voters of Illinois

Celebrating our Centennial, Envisioning our Future.
We are not done yet!

A virtual gathering in celebration and support of the League of Women Voters of Illinois.

Thursday, September 24, 2020
Noon to 1:00 pm

Power the Vote

Vote by Mail

It is predicted that as many as 70% of all ballots cast in the November election will be cast by mail. This rise in vote by mail, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will help to keep people safe and healthy while also keeping our election process accessible and secure. In recent weeks, some government officials have questioned vote by mail and its susceptibility to fraud. These officials are misinformed. Reports from 2017, 2009 and this past year show that between 0.0003%
and 0.0025% of voter impersonation fraud incidents were found per one billion votes cast. It is more likely for an American to be hit by lightning than try to impersonate another voter at the polls. Apply for your vote by mail ballot today and urge five friends to do the same. Vote by mail means you do not have to choose between your health and the right to vote.

Illinois Voter Guide

Once ballots are finalized, the Illinois Voter Guide (IVG), LWVIL’s online voting tool, will have information on every candidate on every ballot in the state. With IVG, every person in Illinois can be an informed voter.

Don’t forget to sign up for the Illinois Voter Guide alerts so that you will be notified when sample ballots and candidate information are available for your specific ballot, no matter where you live in Illinois.

Three Ways to Vote

Vote by Mail (requested ballot is sent to voters starting September 24)
1. Mail ballot back by November 3, in signed return envelope, or
2. Place ballot in dropbox by November 3, in signed return envelope (locations/availability to be determined).

OR

Vote Early starting September 24 at your election authority or starting October 19 at one of your county’s temporary or permanent early voting sites (October 14 in Chicago)

OR

Vote in Person on November 3 at your precinct or at one of your existing early voting sites.

Why the League Supports a Fair Tax
This fall, Illinoisans are being asked to vote to make it possible for the state to tax income at a graduated (Fair) rate. When you VOTE YES for the constitutional amendment on your ballot, you are voting to eliminate the requirement that Illinois taxes income at a single rate. This will allow for Fair Tax reform that will increase state income taxes only for those with more than $250,000 in taxable income. That means that 97% of individuals and small business owners will see either no increase in taxes or will see a decrease. The state is expected to raise more than $3 billion a year through Fair Tax reform, raising money needed for Education, Healthcare, Human Services, and Safety. Visit the LWVIL website for more information, including recent presentations by community leaders and experts. Questions? Reach out to Issues@LWVIL.org and include “Fair Tax” in the subject line.

National Votes for Women Trail

LWVIL’s 100th Anniversary Committee has been instrumental in making sure that the National Votes for Women Trail highlights Illinois’ role in the passage of the 19th Amendment.

The trail, created by The National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites will culminate in a nationwide online map of suffrage sites. Illinois currently has 48 sites on the map.

Permanent markers will be installed at a minimum of five sites in each state, a project fully funded by the Pomeroy Foundation. The LWVIL 100th Anniversary Committee has submitted nominations for markers at sites honoring three women: Grace Wilbur Trout (Oak Park); Catharine Waugh McCulloch (Evanston); and Ellen Martin (Lombard). Four other Chicago sites are in development, to mark the importance of: Agnes Nestor; Fannie Barrier Williams; the Alpha Suffrage Club; and Michigan Avenue.

Please reach out to 100th Anniversary Chair mkubasak@gmail.com with questions.

Criminal Justice Study

LWVIL is studying our position on Criminal Justice, and with the input of Local Leagues will offer an update this spring.
A glaring omission in our existing position is any reference to policing, which has hindered League efforts to address events this summer. An updated position will allow League members to be more actively involved in addressing criminal justice reform. The League does not take action on an issue until it has formally adopted a position on that issue.

The Criminal Justice study looks at research being done on a number of important questions. For example:

- Prosecutors wield great power. How can that power be used to achieve better justice outcomes for all?
- Can restorative justice principles be incorporated into our adversarial legal system?
- Does research convince us that young adults should be treated more as juveniles than adults?
- Can European models of incarceration show us better methods of dealing with those who must be imprisoned?
- What are the barriers that almost ensure that offenders will return to prison after serving their sentences?

The 14-section study begins with Investing in Communities to Reduce Crime and Violence and concludes with Post-Incarceration and Sentence Completion: from Recidivism to Successful Re-entry.

The resources being used for the study can be found on the LWVIL website. Questions? Contact issues@lwvil.org with the subject line "CJ Study."

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**Important Dates to Remember**

- **August 2020**: National Suffrage Month
- **August 12**: Women Power the Vote Discussion Series: LWVUS Defining the Next 100 Years
- **August 13**: Black Women's Equal Pay Day
- **August 26**: 100th Anniversary of adoption of 19th Amendment
- **September 24**: Power the Vote Virtual Benefit
- **June 11-13, 2021**: LWVIL Convention

Please note that this list of important dates is not exhaustive. You can find more events on the LWVIL Events Calendar.
The League of Women Voters Illinois Education Fund (LWVILEF) encourages the informed and active participation in government by providing civic education and voter services. Make a difference today for you and your community with a tax-deductible gift to support our work to defend democracy and empower voters.

Don't forget to follow, like and share with us on social media!