



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2016-2017 YEAR OF ACTION

**EDUCATION**

**ADVOCACY**

**VOTER SERVICE**

## 2017 President's Report

The 2016-2017 League year started with some simple goals: build on our stable financial position and increase membership by 10%. At the annual meeting a new theme for the year was chosen: Year of Action.

The 2016 election showed people the importance of the nuts-and-bolts civics work that we do, with the result that our membership has nearly doubled and there is enormous interest in learning how to take action effectively. We're continuing to run our Chicago in Focus and monthly Open Meeting/Briefings to educate ourselves and others. We're registering voters. We're working hard to integrate our new members. It's been hard work, especially for an organization that is run by its members and not professional staff. Our volunteers have done a fantastic job.

We're hoping that this enthusiasm continues. We want to train more advocates, register more voters and get more people to the polls. Democracy doesn't happen by magic. It requires commitment and elbow grease. We have elections coming up in 2018, 2019 and 2020. These are great opportunities for the League as a whole to make a difference and address the continued problem of low voter turnout.

There are some fun events coming up, too. 2020 is the centennial of women's suffrage in the United States, as well as the centennial of the League of Women Voters – which was founded in Chicago. We are going to have a great celebration!

In a perfect world, there would be no need for the League of Women Voters, but this isn't a perfect world. And so, I look forward to working with everyone in the 2017-2018 League year and into the next century of women's suffrage to Make Democracy Work. --Annie Logue

## Our Mission

**The League of Women Voters of Chicago** is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League influences public policy through education and advocacy. This report chronicles the League's activities and accomplishments for 2016-2017. In addition to a review of the

## Our Year in Numbers

- More than 100 new members joined since July, 2016.
- More than 150 members and non-members learned about city government in 8 Open Meetings/Briefings.
- More than 350 members and non-members learned about voting rights, criminal justice and other issues in free Chicago in Focus events.
- 50 members were trained as Deputy Voter Registrars.
- 30 poll watcher credentials were issued to members.
- Members helped high school students in 5 mock elections complete 1300 ballots.
- 50 volunteers registered voters at 29 events and processed 300 registration forms.

League's work in education and advocacy, this report includes special sections on voter service and membership as well as summaries of the actions taken to strengthen the League and its leadership. It concludes with the League's plans and goals for coming years.

## EDUCATION

### Understanding City/State Government

At LWVChicago's 8 Open Meetings/Briefings in 2016-2017, more than 150 members and nonmembers learned about the:

- City of Chicago, League positions on City Council, including budgeting, privatization, and pension funds, and the ways in which LWVChicago takes Action on policy.
- Chicago City budget. Alexandra Holt, Budget Director, and Molly Poppe, from the Office of Budget and Management, explained the city's taxing structure, including the incidental taxes that are charged for goods and services.
- Chicago Housing Authority and fair housing, from speakers Patricia Fron, executive director of Chicago Fair Housing Alliance, and Bob Palmer, director of policy for Housing Action of Illinois.
- Illinois State Budget and the effect of the budget impasse on children and higher education, from Rep. Greg Harris (D-13<sup>th</sup> District).

Other programs, such as Chicago in Focus and the State of the City Luncheon, presented information on city government to nearly 300 total attendees. David Reifman, Commissioner for the Department of Planning and Development, reviewed the city's economic, building, and workforce development, land use and urban planning. A distinguished panel of journalists discussed the relationship between City Hall and the City Council at the State of the City Luncheon (see photos on pages XX). Colleen Daley, executive director of the Illinois Council against Handgun Violence, spoke about the daily struggle to end gun violence in Chicago.

### Understanding Local, Regional and National Issues and Foreign Policy

LWVChicago programs covered issues surrounding:

- Water management. Speakers from LWVLMR and the city, discussed the environmental status of Lake Michigan, city water management and the Lake Michigan Lakewide Action and Management Plan.
- 2016 National Election results and their effect on Illinois and Chicago. Former alderman and Professor Dick Simpson explained "What Just Happened."
- Life after Innocence. Loyola University Professor Laura Caldwell reported on the incarceration and subsequent readjustment of individuals who were wrongly convicted.

- Foreign affairs. Great Decisions, the Chicago-based guided discussion group that is part of the Foreign Policy Association’s nationwide program, expanded to the North Side. Great Decisions, which involves more than 20 LWVChicago members and others in regular meetings downtown, has been joined by a second group sponsored by Forward Chicago and the Sulzer Library.

Prominent in 2016-2017 were:

- **Voting rights** that emerged or intensified following the 2016 National Election. At a Chicago in Focus event, a panel from the American Civil Liberties Union-Illinois discussed threats as well as opportunities to protect voting rights to 100 participants. Articles in *The Chicago Voter* reviewed voting restrictions and voter turnout and highlighted steps that may be taken to increase turnout and encourage voting in Illinois.



A special publication sent to all members described efforts to reform the Electoral College through the National Popular Vote, the LWVUS position on the issue and actions taken in Illinois.

- **Health care.** LWV members, particularly those in districts whose members favor repeal of the Affordable Care Act, contacted state legislators, attended meetings, town halls and rallies to express the view that continuation of the ACA is important to the health of Chicago and Illinois citizens. Articles in *The Chicago Voter* tracked national legislation concerning the ACA and efforts to repeal and replace it, state legislation on contraceptive coverage, reproductive health, the Cook County Health & Hospital System and a state-of-the-art health center in the city. Health Care Committee members are serving as observers at Cook County Health and Hospital System Board meetings. The committee is working with the Chicago Department of Public Health on its 2.0 Partners Celebration, which is examining the results from the first of a four-year plan to improve health equity in the city of Chicago.

## ADVOCACY

### Fostering Civic Involvement

**Program Planning.** 2016-17 was the year for LWVChicago to review all its positions to determine whether they are still relevant and are supported by members or whether they need to be restudied or dropped. Thirty-eight members participated in this review, which led the Board to recommend retaining all current positions, conduct no new studies and institute Action on Education (see below) and City Council Structure.

**Chicago Public Education.** As a result of Education Committee efforts and its work with other organizations, such as Raise Your Hand, 3000 witness slips were filed with the Illinois House subcommittee in opposition to bills relating to school vouchers. In addition, the committee hosted Ralph Martire, executive director of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, who spoke about an

evidence-based model for school funding. Stemming from its Study Guide on school governance, published in early 2016, the committee is discussing, with state legislators and members of the mayor's staff, the creation of an independent finance and audit committee for the Chicago Board of Education.

### Our Year in Numbers

- In cooperation with Raise Your Hand, the League filed 3000 witness slips with state legislators in opposition to bills involving school vouchers.

As an Action item identified by the LWVChicago Board, pending legislation on the Chicago Board of Education and education funding will be tracked throughout the next program planning period.

**Running for Political Office.** Based on interest expressed at Issues and Action Committee meetings, LWVChicago is exploring issues related to running for political office. A Chicago in Focus event, hosting political consultant Mia Phifer, discussed the realities of running for office, including fundraising with small as well as major donors, planning and organization, and where to start.

**The 2017 Women's March.** LWVChicago joined other Leagues and more than 250,000 men, women, and children who marched in Chicago as part of the national Women's March on January 21.

## Driving Action

LWVChicago continues to offer guidance to members on how to engage with their legislators. The League this year presented information on conducting legislative interviews in *The Chicago Voter*, prepared the fact sheet **So, I Joined the League of Women Voters. What Can I Do Now?** on how to find and contact city and state legislators and gave advice on how to interview aldermen.

## VOTER SERVICE

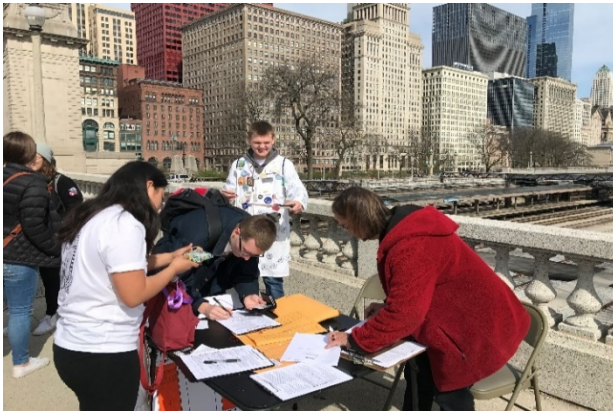
### Providing Election Information

Prior to the National Election on November 8, LWVChicago disseminated election as well as voter information via:

- Printed bookmarks and the LWVChicago web site.
- Presentations on voting and elections to 2 high schools, 3 colleges, and 5 other groups. Five members made presentations about registration and voting to 2 colleges and 6 community groups.
- Mock elections in 5 Chicago public high schools.
- Handouts posted on the web site and emailed to members and associates.
- Links to candidate information, televised debates, VoteForJudges, Ballot Ready and newspaper endorsements.



## • Registering Voters



Fifty members of LWVChicago are Deputy Voter Registrars. In the past year they participated in 29 scheduled events, processed an estimated 300 registration forms and spoke on election procedures at community events, high schools and colleges. Eight members volunteered at high schools and colleges to assist with voter registration. The League also participated in National Voter Registration Day, during which 3 volunteers registered 5 voters. Volunteers (shown

above) registered 23 voters at the Science March on Earth Day.

## Other Activities

LWVChicago partnered with a community group to host a debate between candidates for alderman of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward. One of our members regularly observes Chicago Board of Election meetings and posts report on the web site.

## OUTREACH

LWVChicago's web site, LWVChicago.org, averages 10,000 page requests per month; the highest number was 17,600 in January. Approximately one-third of the users of the web site are directed by Google.

*The Chicago Voter* is published 10 times a year and distributed to 300 members, other LWVs and former members and associates.

An Open House event, held in December, acquainted 40 number of new and prospective members with the League and its Board. Orientation breakfasts were held in February and April for more than 50 new and prospective members.

## STRENGTHENING THE LEAGUE

### Membership

More than 150 individuals have joined LWVChicago since July 2016. Many new members are becoming active and assuming leadership roles. Three new members will assume positions on the Board for 2017-2018; others are becoming active with LWVChicago Committees and activities.

## 2017 STATE OF THE CITY LUNCHEON



More than 80 League Members and guests attended the 2017 LWVChicago event during which a panel of distinguished journalists discussed the relationship between City Hall and the City Council.





Opposite: Greeters Rae Sokolow, Pat Graunke, Helene Gabelnick.  
Union League Club Crystal Ballroom.  
Mary Ann Ahern with luncheon guests.  
Mary Ann Ahern with LWV Illinois President Mary Kubasak.  
LWVChicago President Annie Logue.  
This page: Moderator Mary Ann Ahern.  
Luncheon guests.  
Annie Logue with guests.  
Panelists Mary Mitchell, Hal Dardick, and Lorraine Forte.  
Mary Ann Ahern at the podium.  
Panelists Mary Mitchell, Hal Dardick.  
Closing remarks and gift presentation.  
Photos by Charles Potkay.



## Leadership Development

Five Board members have participated in board development programs held by the University of Chicago, Public Narrative or Executive Services Corp. Five Board members participated in the LWV Membership, Leadership and Development program last summer. More than \$3500 was raised and matched by an anonymous donor who established the Challenge Leadership Grant to support leadership training.

## Organizational Support

Donations by individuals and a grant from the Davee Foundation added \$11095 to the League's operating fund. Registration and individual donations from the State of the City Luncheon added more than \$5000 to the Education Fund.

The League wishes to thank the Davee Foundation, Nancy Brandt, Esta and Tom Kallen and Annie Logue for their generosity. The League also wishes to thank the Union League Club and Riverside Printing for their support.



## 2017-2018 LOOKING AHEAD

### Communications

The LWVChicago Communications Committee is in the process of rebuilding and replacing the web site with a new hosting and development platform that includes more functions and features, improving social media capabilities, releasing timely issue-oriented publications and redesigning *The Chicago Voter*.

### Voter Service

The League will continue and expand voter registration activities involving students in high schools and colleges, provide election information, hold candidate debates for the Primary Elections in March 2018 and observe Chicago Board of Election meetings.

## Advocacy

LWVChicago will strength its corps of government observers and engage members in direct interaction with their legislative representatives by interviewing their aldermen.

## Educational Programs

In the talking stages are programs on immigration, health care, ethics in government and a possible regional summit on threats to the environment.

## LWVCHICAGO

### OFFICERS

Annie Logue, President  
Jill Althage, Vice President  
Esta Kallen, Vice President  
Alice Perlin, Secretary  
Pat Vogtman, Treasurer

### DIRECTORS

Nancy Brandt  
Bernice Fortini  
Helene Gabelnick  
Pat Graunke  
Margaret Herring  
Cathy Potkay  
Karen Sandrick  
Rae Sokolow

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Communications: Cathy Potkay  
Education: Rae Sokolow  
Health Care: Margaret O'Hara  
Housing/Social Policy: Herb Ziegeldorf  
Issues and Action: Pat Graunke  
Membership: Pat Graunke

State of the City: Rae Sokolow  
Voter Service: Helene Gabelnick

### UNIT LEADERS

Marcia Cowing, Betsy Perrine  
Dorothy Scheff

Carol Ziegeldorf  
Margaret Herring  
Bernice Fortini  
Joan Morton

LWVChicago, 332 S. Michigan Ave.,  
Suite 634, 312-939-5949,  
LWVChicago.org,  
[League@LWVChicago.org](mailto:League@LWVChicago.org)

