



THE VOTER

Glen Ellyn League of Women Voters

November, 2011

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our first quarter seems as fleeting as the mid-west summer. I was shocked out of my warm weather idle by last week's low temperatures: with it came the urge to make soup. We were almost *in* the soup when our speaker for the Summer Wine and Cheese cancelled at the last minute, but Superintendent Ruscitti of the Regional Office of Education came to our rescue, and the evening found us chock-a-block in Cleo's lovely home. Thank you, Cleo!

The September Kick Off followed, with our new Village Manager, Mark Franz. Mr. Franz was already quite knowledgeable about Village issues, and refreshingly, did not pretend familiarity when he wasn't. Despite his youthful appearance, his confidence could only be chalked up to experience. Portfolio chairs signed up committee members with mixed success, despite the excellent coordination by Lisa Basso and her committee.

October brought the Education Study Presentation, superbly coordinated by Kim Reed. Superintendents from Glen Ellyn's three school districts spoke at this well-attended event. No chalkboard was necessary as the "supes" had coordinated their well prepared and informative presentation. The Education Study Consensus meeting is coming up on **November 12** at the Civic Center. Please join us (as well as at our fundraiser on **December 8** at Ten Thousand Villages.)

Hanano Anderson and I attended the Lake Michigan LWV annual meeting, where we learned much about the state of the Lake, as well as issues surrounding it and plans for improvement. (A report is forthcoming, but not in this issue, as it is chock full already.)

The website looks great. Don't forget to "chock" it out (okay, I'm reaching here) for the latest news and updates, as well as links to other Leagues and organizations. Thank you to Ginger for her technical expertise.

Speaking of the website, you can use it to link to a YouTube video about the Moving Planet Day of Climate Action that took place on September 24. Viewing the video does not at all resemble eating chalk. It's really fun, as I understand the event was, thanks to the coordination of many, including our own Jeff Gahris.

Thanks also to those women (you know who you are) who are always there to keep this organization moving forward, and prevent us from rolling down the hill, into the soup. You are the chocks behind the wheels of the LWVGE!

Diana Hoke, LWVGE Co-President

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CALENDAR

- Nov 12th -Education Study Consensus Mtg. Civic Center 9am-1pm.
- Dec. 8th— Fundraiser at Ten Thousand Villages 5-8 p.m.
- Dec. 8th— Holiday Open House at Dorothy Hess' 5-8 p.m.
- Jan 7th—Book Club, Michelle Peterson's, 9 a.m.
- Jan 26th— Great Decisions, Diana Nichols, 7:00 p.m.



LWVGE PORTFOLIO REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP: Dorothy Hess

It has been a busy fall for membership. As of September 30, we have 106 paid members in our League. If you have not yet paid your 2011-2012 dues, you are certainly not too late. Membership is open year round, and we would love to have you join us! Just send your check to me, Dorothy Hess, 629 Pleasant Avenue, Glen Ellyn 60137. Please include: your name, address, phone number and email address. Single membership dues are \$62 and an additional member at the same address is \$31. Not sure if you renewed? Just call me at (630) 858-8768 and I'll check.

Please welcome our newest members and add their names to the roster in the directory:

Karen Aho 155 Hudson Ct., Roselle 60172 (630) 351-7027 karen.aho@bartlit-beck.com

Rikita Zimmerman 820 S. Walnut St., Roselle 60172 (630) 582-8727 rikita.zimmerman@sbcglobal.net

More than 65 members returned their membership surveys along with their dues. If you did, your interests have been noted, and you will be contacted by the appropriate portfolio or committee chairs as help is needed, but feel free to contact any of the board members listed in the directory to get involved.

Your 2011-2012 Membership Directory should have been delivered to you by now. If you have not received it, please contact me and I will make sure you receive one. Thank you to all who helped deliver the directories. Please check your membership information on the list in the back of the directory, and let me know if a correction or update is needed.

BOARD OBSERVER/GLEN ELLYN PARK DISTRICT: Bonnie Gahris

I attended the meeting on Sept 20th. There was quite a bit of discussion regarding Park District non-referendum bonds and whether they want to do them, and if so, when. The Park District has \$1.6 million in capital projects budgeted, but around \$1.2 million is earmarked for repairing Ackerman's roof (this may be recouped later.) The Finance Superintendent indicated that they could go for bonds next spring, summer or fall-the later the better due to better interest rates. Not all of the Board is in favor of seeking the non-referendum bonds. Old bonds could be paid off with new bonds, but there would be fees. 2012 will be a lean year due to Ackerman roof repairs. The Executive Director indicated if non-referendum bonds are not obtained for capital projects, money may have to be taken from other areas. We will need to keep an eye on Park District non-referendum bonds. It was interesting to learn that the overage on Ackerman Sports Complex (around \$4 million) was funded by non-referendum bonds. Some board members are sensitive to the over-spending by prior Board.

BOARD OBSERVER/COLLEGE OF DUPAGE: Julie Nolan and Peggy McGrath

Julie and Peggy reported to the LWVGE Board that they are concerned with the way in which the COD Board conducts its business. There is very little discussion during the board meetings by the board members about the topics on the agenda, and it appears that a lot of the discussions are taking place prior to the meeting. In addition, the rules appear to discourage public input. Julie and Peggy requested permission to discuss their concerns with Sandy Pihos, who is on the State's Higher Education Committee. It was also suggested that they contact neighboring leagues to see if they might be interested in partnering with us on keeping a closer watch on what is going on.

11 November 2011

Clarification on Board Observer Report for College of DuPage, as summarized in the Nov. 2011 Voter:

The November 2011 LWVGE Voter contained a brief summary of our presentation to the League Board at the October Board meeting. The actual Observer reports, covering the last two years of COD Board of Trustees meetings, appear on the LWVGE website. We encourage you to read those reports.

Since Julie and I neither wrote nor reviewed the summary, we want to clarify a couple points about board discussions and public input. First, over 24 months of meetings, Trustees have rarely asked questions of college personnel in the public meetings and nearly all motions pass unanimously without discussion. This has occurred during a period of huge expenditures of public monies, rapid growth and building, curriculum change, passage of a referendum, and intergovernmental issues with the village including a motion to de-annex from the village. In the public meetings, college administrators encourage Trustees to call or email them if they have questions about proposals, budgets, etc. Our concern centers on transparency and accountability. Because any questions, if they are asked, are not asked in the public forum, the public has no way of knowing if any questions have been asked. Trustees are elected to represent the public's interest. With few comments and little discussion, it is impossible to know whether the Trustees are discharging that responsibility.

Second, the rule for public comment at board meetings requires that anyone wishing to speak to the Trustees must sign up on a list outside the board room before 7 p.m. when the meeting starts. If a member of the public arrives after 7 p.m., there is no provision for addressing the board at that meeting. Complicating this is the public agenda which often gives very limited detail so the public may be unaware of issues to be voted on until the vote is called. Therefore, topics arising out of the meeting that might engender public comment cannot be addressed at that time.

We will continue to observe the monthly meetings and submit written reports which will be on the LWVGE website.

Peggy McGrath and Julie Nolan, COD Board Observers



IN MEMORIAM-MARY JO ARNDT (1933-2011)

LWVGE member Mary Jo Arndt passed away on Saturday, September 24th. She joined our League in 2001 after the Lombard league disbanded. Mary Jo was an activist for women's rights and a leader in suburban Republican politics. She served as one of the first female student body presidents at Northern Illinois University. From there she joined the York Township Republicans and served as a committeewoman for the Republican National Committee in Illinois, president of the National Federation for Republican Women and founded the Illinois Republican Women's Roundtable. Her interests were not limited to politics. Among other interests, she was a member of the Rotary Club, served on the board of directors for the Lincoln Park Zoo, and was a longtime member of the First Church of Lombard. She was instrumental in preserving the Maple Street Chapel in Lombard. She and her husband established the Lombard Veterinary Hospital in 1959. Mary Jo will be missed by our League. A donation has been sent to the League Education Fund in her memory.

Dorothy Hess, Membership Chair

REPORT OF THE FINANCE DRIVE

Thank you all for a wonderful response to the fall Finance Drive. We exceeded our goal. Many thanks to the contributors and the solicitors. The totals are as follows: Member contributions \$825 plus \$660 to the Education Fund; Non-Members: \$30; and Business Partners \$1800 for a grand total of \$2,595! We are very grateful to the generous donations of our business partners and encourage all of our members to support these local businesses. Next time you visit, please tell them that you are a League member and that you appreciate their support.

Barb Fried, Finance Drive Chair

GREAT DECISIONS

Please join us on January 26th for an informative discussion about Multiculturalism. Jean Sheldon will be leading the discussion. Great Decisions is held at Dow and Diana Nichol's home at 290 Forest Avenue, Glen Ellyn. The evening begins with a DVD at 7:00 p.m. and the discussion begins at 7:30 p.m.

CALLING ALL BOOK LOVERS

The next selection for the LWVGE book club is *The Ripple Effect* by Alex Prud'homme. This book looks at how people in the U.S. and around the world are using and abusing water, and how they are preparing for what the UN calls the "looming water crisis." Books will be available at the Glen Ellyn library reference desk (upstairs) beginning December 7th. We will meet to discuss the book on Saturday, January 7th at 9:00 a.m. at Michelle Peterson's, 579 Riford Road. We hope to see you there!

Shawn Fasules, Book Club Co-Chair

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

The Moving Planet DuPage committee is meeting in early November to discuss the success of the Moving Planet event, and what we learned from the experience. We had good attendance considering the uncertain weather (over 200 participants), a nice award ceremony involving the Sierra Club and several mayors, and some good networking and plain fun. ComEd, Blue Star Energy, the Citizens Utility Board, and the Illinois Coalition for Responsible Outdoor Lighting supplied representatives and/or literature. Thanks to LWVGE volunteers who spent several hours at the Glen Ellyn station on the Prairie Path, namely Bonnie Gahris, Cleo Burtis, and Michelle Peterson. The Glenbard West Eco Club also helped out. Finally we seemed to have some good news coverage.

A question that we need to address for Cool Cities is "what next?" The message needs to be refreshed and some new strategies discussed both nationally and locally. Now that the new management in Glen Ellyn's government has settled in, we need to re-engage them. More to come on this. Meanwhile those who use Facebook may consider "liking" the Illinois Cool Cities page to stay tuned.

Jeffrey Gahris, Environmental Chair



HOLIDAY FUNDRAISER AND OPEN HOUSE

Start your holiday season this year by joining us for a fun evening of shopping and fellowship. On December 8th, Ten Thousand Villages in downtown Glen Ellyn will once again be donating part of the evening's proceeds to our local league. Hours for shopping are 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Dorothy Hess has graciously offered to host an open house at her house, 629 Pleasant Avenue, Glen Ellyn during those same hours so stop on by either before or after shopping to share some holiday cheer with your fellow leaguers. There is a suggested donation of \$5 to cover expenses for the open house. Hope to see you there!

**From the Leaders' Guide for the Education Study Consensus:
DISCUSSION POINTS KEYED TO CONSENSUS QUESTIONS**

The goal of the consensus meeting(s) is to come to agreement on your League's answers to the consensus questions. The following discussion guide has been compiled to help focus your discussion. It is presented in a format parallel to the consensus questions for convenience of reference.

CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

General Questions:

These General Questions apply to the overall focus of the study. We think you will find it interesting to ask these questions briefly at the beginning of your consensus meeting(s), record the answers, and then go back to them again at the end of the session. See if opinions have changed during the discussion. While they may seem simple, they are important to developing strong positions. All page numbers are from the PDF versions of the background papers.

- 1. The current role of the federal government in public education is**
 Much too small too small about right too large much too large
- 2. What should be the role of the federal government in public education? (Rank)**
 - a. To ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education.
 - b. To develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress.
 - c. To mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12.
 - d. To monitor state efforts for funding
 - e. To measure teacher effectiveness through test data.

This looks like an easy question but will be very important in forming a strong position for future action:

- 3. A quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.**
 Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree

Common Core Standards:

Common Core Standards and the related assessments are an important part of the study with one section devoted just to this. Make sure members clearly understand that these are national standards, developed by the National Governors' Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and are not a federal government mandate, even though acceptance of the standards was a requirement to qualify for "Race to the Top" funding. Remember this is a national study and the question is how these should relate to national programs. This is not the place for a discussion of "our state math standards are better than these," however tempting it may be. Background on pages 3 and 4 of the "Common Core Standards and Assessments" research paper will help with understanding.

Educational standards define the knowledge and skills students should possess at critical points in their educational career.

Curriculum is an educational plan that spells out which goals and objectives will be achieved, how to achieve those goals and what topics should be covered as well as the methods and materials to be used for learning and evaluation.

There is a logical progression from standards to assessments based on these standards to curriculum aligned with the standards and tests. How much of a role do we think the federal government should have in this continuum? (see pdf page 3 of Common Core Standards paper):

4. Currently the governors and state education officers have developed Common Core Standards that are national but not federal. Should the standards be mandated of the states in order to obtain federal funding? (Choose one)

- a. Special grant programs such as Race to the Top
- b. All programs under Elementary and Secondary Education Act where the needs qualify for funding.
- c. All programs receiving federal funding from any source
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

This is a key follow-up question to the previous one. If your group rejects the national standards, then the answer will be easy. If they accept the common core standards, then this will be an important discussion. Pages 7-9 of the "Common Core Standards" paper discuss the assessments that are being developed. The first question is simply – are these assessments needed, and the second question is how should they be utilized? Here you may want to discuss the comparisons of states that are published by different organizations each year and how they are usually based on different tests in different states. There is also room for discussion of the costs of these tests and whether those costs should be fully covered if mandated. Be sure to also consider the costs of tests originated by the state and local districts. (see pdf pages 1-6 Common Core Standards):

5. Should there be a national assessment aligned with the common cores standards?

Yes No

If Yes, Should implementation be voluntary or federally mandated? (choose one)

- a. Voluntary
- b. Mandated
- c. Mandated, if fully funded

If No, what other accountability measures might you suggest? (choose one)

- a. Continue to allow the states to develop their own assessments.
- b. Suggest that the local education districts use their own assessments or adopt one that is a nationally norm-referenced assessment such as the Stanford Achievement Test or Iowa Test of Basic Skills.
- c. Suggest that districts use a portfolio type of assessment where student projects and activities would be scored holistically

A potentially logical next step could be to develop a national curriculum that would meet the standards and be aligned with the assessment tools. Carefully consider this in light of answers to the two previous questions and strive for a consistent answer. What should the federal role be? Is this different from a national role that is not mandated? (see pdf page 11 Common Core Standards and Glossary):

6. National standards should lead to: (choose one)

- a. A nationally mandated curriculum to be aligned to the national standards and assessments.
- b. A national curriculum that is only suggested but not mandated.
- c. A suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum.
- d. No national curriculum.

This question concerns the current two consortia who have won \$3.5 million to develop assessments that follow the Common Core State Standards by 2014. This is where streams get mixed, as they have received a federal grant to prepare assessments based on national standards. What should be the goal(s) of these groups? (see pdf page 7 Common Core Standards):

7. What role should the national assessment consortia play in student evaluation? (Rank order)

- a. Provide an assessment system that is aligned to the Common Core Standards.
- b. Provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards.
- c. Provide criteria for determining readiness for college and careers.
- d. Provide information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement.
- e. Provide diagnostic information on each child.

This question focuses upon the purpose of a national assessment program. The purpose of any mandated, nationally normed (see Glossary) test has been much debated. This goes to the much debated parts of NCLB, to value-added statistical models for evaluation of teachers, merit pay and similar topics often in the news. Be prepared here for discussion that may be highly charged. But it is important to know if we have consensus on these items. (pdf pages 8-11 Common Core Standards):

8. Data from the national assessments are often difficult for parents, teachers and others to understand. If we have a national assessment, what information is most important to be reported to parents, teachers, students and the community? (choose one)

- a. Data should be "norm referenced" (where students are ranked) for district comparison only.
- b. Data should be "criterion referenced" and clearly informative so that teachers, parents, and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level.
- c. Data should be used to determine "cut" scores knowing if students have mastered requirements for special grade levels.

9. Information from nationally required assessment data should be used to (Choose one):

- a. Sanction schools not measuring up to the specific levels
- b. Reward schools that achieve high scores
- c. Rank teachers based on student test score data
- d. Reward teachers who have exemplary scores
- e. Inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs.

Funding and Equity:

This part of the study deals more with the traditional federal involvement in public education and how it has evolved. You might want to briefly review the history paper and Timetable posted on the lwv.org website. Allow time to fully discuss these questions: whether members think federal funds should be distributed mostly based on need, population and enrollment or they should be given only to those who best qualify for

competitive grants. How should mandates and funding be related, or should they? What should the relationship be? One example of a mandate attached to funding was the requirement to lift the cap on the number of charter schools to qualify for Race to the Top funding. This is an area that will require time. (pdf pages 7-8 Equity and funding):

10. In the past most of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding has been non-competitive based on need. All/Any Schools that prove they fall under the federal guidelines for funding receive those funds. However, competitive grants are now being proposed to states/districts who meet certain federal requirements, such as Race to the Top. Which would be appropriate: (choose one)

- a. Non-competitive funding for all applicants meeting requirements
- b. A combination of non-competitive and competitive grants
- c. Competitive grants only
- d. No federal funding

Mandates are not always a bad thing. Integration was a mandate, so was Title IX (gender equity). Most school administrators would emphasize the need for federal mandates to be federally funded. Some are; some, like Head Start, are only expected to do what the funding allows. Others, such as Special Education, have never been fully funded. Think carefully about this one. What is the "common good"? (see pdf pages 3-5 Equity and Funding):

11. If the federal government's role is the concern of the "common good" then: (choose one)

- a. Mandates only should be sanctioned.
- b. Mandates and funding should both be provided.
- c. Funding should be provided through grants only.
- d. A combination of funded mandates and grants should apply.
- e. No mandates should be required and limited grants for innovation available.

Equity is a word that has had an evolving definition (see Glossary). It is not the same as equal funding as there is a growing awareness that some students are more expensive to educate than others. Others talk about "adequacy," "equity of opportunity" and "opportunity to learn" – ideas that deal with access to what is deemed necessary in order to have an equal opportunity, opportunities that are often denied children of poverty. While not all of these may be considered the responsibility of the local educational system, is it a federal responsibility to tackle them? Is it a local responsibility? Should these non-academic issues be considered? This is more fully discussed early in the "Equity and Funding" paper. (see pdf pages 3-4 and 8-10 Equity and Funding):

12. Equity in public education means equitable access to: (Rank order)

- a. high quality teaching/learning
- b. adequate and current learning materials
- c. clean and well maintained physical facilities
- d. food and health care
- e. safe and secure neighborhoods
- f. secure housing

Traditionally all federal funding has been aimed at special groups, those that were deemed underserved by Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) authorizers. These may be minorities – those with disabilities, living in poverty, not speaking English as a primary language or with other identifying characteristics. Each population and its justification are discussed in the paper on special populations.

Many of these numbers are growing nationwide, and funding does not always keep up with the growth. The question is, should this funding still be targeted to individual groups? Or should it be either block granted, where it can be used for multiple purposes, and/or blended into the general fund? (see pdf pages 1-4 Equity and Funding and all pages of Special Populations on Equity and Funding):

13. Currently Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding is considered "categorical" rather than for general use. This means that it can only be used with special populations for special purposes. ESEA should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs.

Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree

Much current educational research emphasizes the role of early childhood education in giving all children an even start when entering kindergarten. The question here is the role of the federal government: Should it play a role in extending this to all children? (see pdf pages 1-5 Early Childhood):

14. The federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5, for all children?

Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree

15. Federal support for early childhood education programs (e.g. Head Start, Title I, Special Education, Early Start) should include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed.

a. Strongly Agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly Disagree

b. This funding should be extended to:

All children only those with special needs special needs first



**Glen Ellyn League of
Women Voters**

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OUR WEBSITE
www.lwvge.org**

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization that does not support or oppose any political party or candidate but whose purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to act on selected governmental issues.

LWVUS EDUCATION STUDY CONSENSUS MEETING

Please join us on Saturday, November 12th from 9 a.m. until no later than 1 p.m. at the Glen Ellyn Civic Center for the LWVUS Education Study Consensus Meeting. Come be part of this very important study! Consensus is not a vote. It is a mutual agreement of League members who have arrived at the agreement through discussion. During discussion, everyone has an opportunity to voice their viewpoints, and the issue is examined from all sides. Consensus questions (a copy of which is included in this Voter) will provide structure for the meeting. Members discuss the pros and cons until it becomes clear that consensus has or has not been reached on each question. Coffee, a light breakfast, and snacks will be provided. Please bring your own water bottle or coffee mug (in an attempt to be "greener.") We would encourage you to review the consensus questions included in this packet as well as read the background papers which can be accessed from either website:

<http://www.lwvge.org/pages/edstudy.html>
<http://www.lwvil.org/2011EducationStudy.asp>

WE WANT AND NEED YOUR INPUT SO PLEASE JOIN US!