



September 2017

# Have we lost the spirit of Labor Day?

Excerpt from: [The Conversation.com](http://TheConversation.com)

Labor Day is a U.S. national holiday held the first Monday every September. Unlike most U.S. holidays, it is a strange celebration without rituals, except for shopping and barbecuing.

The holiday's founders in the late 1800s envisioned something very different from what the day has become. The founders were looking for two things: a means of unifying union workers and a reduction in work time.

Long working hours caused many union organizers to focus on winning a shorter eight-hour work day. They also focused on getting workers more days off, such as the Labor Day holiday,

and reducing the workweek to just six days. Surprisingly, many politicians and business owners were actually in favor of giving workers more time off. That's because workers who had no free time were not able to spend their wages on traveling, entertainment or dining out.

As the U.S. economy expanded beyond farming and basic manufacturing in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it became important for businesses to find consumers interested in buying the products and services being produced in ever greater amounts. Shortening the work week was one way of turning the working class into the consuming class.

Today Labor Day is no longer about trade unionists marching down the street with banners and their tools of trade.

Although the battle over workers issues would seem to have been won long ago, this issue is starting to come back with a vengeance, especially for highly skilled white-collar workers, many of whom are constantly connected to work.

If you work all the time and never really take a vacation, start a new ritual that honors the original spirit of Labor Day. Give yourself the day off. Don't go in to work. Shut off your phone, computer and other electronic devices connecting you to your daily grind. Then go to a barbecue, like the original participants did over a century ago, and celebrate having at least one day off from work during the year!

## We turned 95!



In case you missed it, the Rockford chapter of the League of Women Voters turned 95 this year.

We held the event on July 21<sup>st</sup> at the Ethnic Heritage Museum. Our guest speakers were the Illinois League of Women Voters President Bonnie Cox and our very own Alice Heath.

Alice's speech can be found here:

"Thank you all so very much for coming to help the LWVGR celebrate 95 years of activity for the Greater Rockford community as a local group and for our state and nation. It is my honor and privilege to thank the committee who worked so diligently to put together this unique and interesting history of the League. It is also an honor to meet Mrs. Bonnie Cox, our state president from our neighbors to the West in Galena and to say a tremendous

thank you to our president, Claire McIntyre. Claire is one of the hardest working and knowledgeable presidents of our time and now we have a co-president, Chris Hilltrop. A special thank you to the Board and Staff of Ethnic Heritage Museum who made this possible for us. I am pleased to share with you, at our president's request, what I can remember about the League. This is mostly from the time I joined more than 50 years ago as well as what I learned from the then older members as well as community involvement.

Because the display tells its own story of the women involved either as members working on League Committees and their efforts, or women who have served in elected or appointed offices, it seems timely to forego repetition of that information.

However, I do want to share stories of 2 of those women as they were personal for me. One was Senator Betty Anne Keegan, who as Constitutional Convention elected delegate from the area, in her infinite wisdom, invited several of her constituents to Springfield to sit in on committee meetings. She did this whenever committees were meeting that involved area citizens such as education, finance, natural resources, public health, or whatever issues of which she was a part. I was not aware of other Con. Delegates doing this for their constituency but that doesn't mean they did not invite them.

The other member in our display was Margaret Wyeth. For whatever reason, I was taking minutes of a meeting as I wasn't secretary. When I finished them and read them to Margaret, she immediately took me to task because I had used a word such as an, of, by, for, or some other 2 letter word. She corrected me to a fare thee well and pointed out how the 2 letter word that I had used could be implied in about 6 or 7 different ways and none were good. I did think I knew nouns, adverbs, adjectives fairly well but not after she got through with me.

Now on to parts of the 1950's and 1960's and some of the women who helped make the LWV what it is today.

**"We truly owe a debt of gratitude to those upon whose shoulders we stand from the inception of the Rockford League. There were members who had a very conservative stance of politics and those who had a very liberal stance."**

Much as I hate labeling, this seems somewhat a universal description. There were some early members whose adult children I knew and knew fairly well who were founders of Rockford Area 4 Freedoms Study Group which was a focus of the John Birch Society. There were also members who were espousing very liberal views and the important part of this type of diversity was that they all respected and supported each other's rights to their views all the while mindful of the LWV mission

**“The purpose of the LWVGR shall be to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to act on selected governmental issues.”**

The key part of this comparison is that they respected and were interested in each other's opinions and how they came by those opinions.

In the 1960's, the League was very strong in defense of Open Housing and scattered housing. Some of our members at that time were key factors in teaching us how red-lining worked in real estate in Rockford and I am eternally grateful for their forthright and honesty with us on this issue. I am referring to such valued members as Laura Salter,

Irene Gilbert, Margie Sturgis, Mildred Turner and Hazel Robinson. Our own Doris Nolan would have been part of that but was almost too young! And Estelle Black is still teaching us today. Although all of these women and their husbands had outstanding contributory children, the one that stands out is Hazel Robinson because I knew her daughter, Marcella Harris, very well. Marcella was telling some of us at that time that people would say they didn't mind black people as neighbors but her mother and father were looking for housing as their home was being torn down for the N. 2nd Street N. 6th street new underpass and diversion. Realtors were guiding them to housing other than what they wanted or could easily afford.

During that time we also had many valuable contributing members of committees and some ran for public office. I am thinking of Eileen Hogshead and Olive Fenton Samuels as well as other members who helped on campaigns.

In addition, we have always had a very active Voter Registration Committee and many deputy registrars, currently headed by Sue Janson. I feel we are very fortunate in having an ethical Rockford City Board of Elections



*Bonnie Cox, Alice Heath, Claire McIntyre, Chris Hiltrop*

and Winnebago County Board of Elections. One does not hear of ballot boxes being found in sewers after election counting and winners declared.

As if the League wasn't busy enough, we had our own Dr. Justine Walhout and Betty Johnson who worked so tirelessly on the Byron Nuclear Plant Safety. Also many members sat in regularly on school board meetings, city council meetings, Nuclear Plant hearings, new Public Safety Building dedication event, and so much more. Incidentally, Dr. Walhout was much later also on the State Board of Education, and then worked for months on the "Parents Speak" survey of "The Views of 546 Parents of Elementary School Children in the Rockford, Illinois Area about Their Child's Education."

This was developed by The LWVGR with the Health Systems Research, U of I COM in 2000. While this is out of chronological

order, it was in conjunction with Joel Cowen at that time who much later has worked tirelessly on mental health issues with Elaine Pfluger and Dick Kunnert. Although Dick is not a LWVGR member, he is a valuable resource to these 2 members and the mental health committee.

In the 1980's and 1990's we had our knowledgeable and dedicated member Ruth Roth who literally put "Ground Water" in our agenda and while easy for us to adopt because of environmental concerns, she also was instrumental in the RVC Ground Water Festival and ultimately worked at the Winn. Co. PHD as Ground Water Coordinator for Boone and Winnebago Co.

**Well, we haven't even scratched the surface of what the LWVGR stood for or achieved** and even the 2 China Studies in International Relations hasn't been properly addressed due to time and space.

But 3 of our own LWV members made the trip to China when it first opened, Colleen Holmbeck, Sen. Vivian Hickey, and Dorothy Espenscheid. And we have had board members go on to become attorneys at law as has Barbara Smith here with us this evening. Also a former president, Dawn Hallsten has gone on to be an attorney at law so many members don't end their involvement with the League – they become even more educated.

As if that wasn't enough, in the 1950's and 1960's League member Betty Canfield was Rockford's first woman attorney having studied law under her husband Robert Canfield. He was a former State Representative as well as State Senator and at that time, that was an avenue for people to become attorneys at law.

At times we were told to be "League Like" and on one occasion, a VP of U S called us Effete, impudent, intellectual snobs. He didn't last long or make much of a mark.

I am so sorry I cannot speak further of all the wonderful LWV members whom I know and value but DST might end and I would just barely be beginning.

I do hope you all have a wonderful enjoyable evening and again, a special thanks to all the LWVGR and Ethnic Heritage Museum people who made this possible."

Thank you, Alice!



Don't miss these upcoming events!

**your VOTE  
is your VOICE**

Voter Registration  
Sunday, August 27, 2017  
Noon-6pm  
Katie's Cup  
Seventh Street  
Rockford, IL 61104

Please bring two forms of I.D.,  
one with current address

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Human Trafficking  
Presentation

Tuesday, September 26, 2017  
5:30-7:30 PM  
North Suburban Library  
6340 North Second Street  
Loves Park, IL 61111  
Local Government Cmte.  
with AAUW presents: "

RAASE Jennifer Caccipaglia  
Lori Johnson A Legislative  
Update by Special Guest State  
Representative Litesa Wallace

Refreshments will be served.

# Committee Updates



## Presidents Report

On August 14, the board met to discuss goals for the 2017-19 Biennial. Because some of these ideas are extensive, they are goals we will work towards but don't expect to accomplish in a year's time.

Taking our cue from the national League, one of our goals is to become more diversified and representative of the Greater

Rockford area. At the LWVIL 2017 Convention, LWVUS CEO Wylecia Wiggs Harris spoke on the need for greater diversity and inclusion in the League. Diversity and inclusion takes many forms, including but not limited to ethnic and racial diversity, political viewpoint, economic diversity, and inclusion of ages and abilities. It will take planning and robust outreach to accomplish a more diversified membership so that we truly represent the diverse community we serve. Discussion focused on ways we can be more accessible- from locating our meetings to more central locations to changing committee meeting times to include working members to addressing membership cost.

This will be an ongoing discussion our membership committee and board will need to address and they would welcome additions to their committee. This is critical to the relevancy and effectiveness of the League in general and LWVGR in particular.

We are also aware that one of our key committees, the health committee which addresses behavioral/ mental health and healthcare concerns, is in need of bolstering. They are working hard on adequate mental health care availability in the Rockford region in cooperation with other organizations. Chair Elaine Pfluger is open to meeting time and location options so that more members and new members can become involved. We are asking LWVGR members to help recruit new members with an interest in behavioral/mental health care. As you can see from Elaine's committee report, they have a heavy agenda for the upcoming year.

One of the League's most successful programs over its 97 year history has been its Observer Corps; an opportunity for League members to observe and report on the workings of local government. It has several purposes, from informing our membership of what is of current importance, educates our members as to the workings of local government, provides League visibility and provides the presence of a nonpartisan watchdog. While LWVGR once had a thriving Observer Corps, it has not been active in several years. This is a program that the board would like to see resurrected. For those who cannot be active during the day or who prefer a small but important role, observing a public meeting once or twice a month might be an opportunity to be involved without being overcommitted. If there is anyone who thinks this might be a role they would enjoy, please contact us at [lwvgr22@gmail.com](mailto:lwvgr22@gmail.com). This guide from the national League explains what it means to become an observer: <http://lww.org/content/observing-your-government-action-guide>

We look forward to hearing your ideas about what would make LWVGR an effective organization and ideas for programming that you would like us to address.

Chris and Claire

## Communications Report

We would like to welcome our new Voter editor Maria Palmeri. We are very excited to add her to our team. We discussed adding Facebook Groups to our page and will be researching the best method to use this feature. If there are any committees that would like to try this please let us know.

We created a new email list serve address to help members get information to all facets of the communications team. Please send emails to [lwvgr-comm@lwvgr.net](mailto:lwvgr-comm@lwvgr.net). This will get the information to Janie Wilson-Cook for the website, Maria Palmeri for the Voter, June Jacob for a press release and Teresa/Janie if help is needed for a flyer.

Please let us know what type of help you need in the email. We hope this will help streamline getting our information out to the community.

Our next meeting will be in October.

Don't forget to use [lwvgr-comm@lwvgr.net](mailto:lwvgr-comm@lwvgr.net).

Thank you,

Teresa

## Education Report

The Education Committee has been working to educate the public about the importance of overriding Governor Rauner's amendatory veto of SB1, the school funding reform model which replace our current broken funding system that favors wealthy districts over those with lower property values and higher percentages of needier students.

A brief explanation of SB1 may be found at <https://budgetblog.ctbaonline.org/education-funding-reform-passes-the-general-assembly-64a55beg62e8>

Governor Rauner, claimed the bill favors Chicago, an unsubstantiated claim proven erroneous by numerous sources such as PoliFact and the Better Government Association. On August 1, Governor Rauner signed an amendatory veto making over 100 changes to the original bill, going way beyond the changes he pledged to make regarding Chicago. This veto makes substantive changes to how the bill works and will ultimately have a negative impact on all schools within the state.

One example of these changes that will negatively impact local districts is the requirement to count TIF districts and tax cap (PTELL) value as available revenue to the schools, although these are sources from which the districts receive no tax revenue. Because the state counts local effort in the calculation of school funding the districts receive from state sources, it effectively reduces the available funds the schools have to operate by artificially inflating the districts' Equalized Assessed Valuation.

In an effort to generate support for an override, LWVGR organized a meeting on August 1 of local community leaders to discuss SB 1. About 25 community leaders attended. Unfortunately, the governor's AV was submitted that morning, making it difficult to have a meaningful discussion on what his veto would mean as it had yet to be analyzed. However, Ginger Ostros and Ben Boer from Advance Illinois were able to answer questions and facilitate discussion. On August 8th, working with Advance Illinois and the Regional Office of Education, LWVGR arranged for and participated in a press conference, receiving excellent press coverage. Several superintendents, Rep. Litesa Wallace, Sen. Steve Stadelman, a representative from LULAC, and Claire McIntyre, representing LWVGR spoke on the need to override the governor's veto.

On August 16th, working with the League, League member Sarah Logeman has arranged for Ralph Martire to speak to the area Indivisible groups and the general public. Ralph will be able to address the impact of the Governor's AV. The next meeting of the Education Committee will be on **September 12 at 4:15 at Meg's on Alpine**. League members interested in education issues are welcome to attend.

## Environment Report

The Environmental Issues Committee will resume meeting in September. The committee will meet on **Tuesday, September 26th, at 11:30 a.m. at Katie's Cup**, which is located at 502 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Rockford. I invite all those interested in environmental issues to join us.

## Healthcare Report

The Health Care committee will not be meeting in August. We are recruiting new members to join us on the important topic of Behavioral/Mental Health Care in Winnebago County for the LWV fiscal year.

Join us for the Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> committee meeting, when we set goals for FY 17/18.

### AGENDA

- Update from League member, Tricia Sweeney, on the Status of the Mental Health Advisory Committee of Winnebago County and how the League members can help with their goals.
- Evaluation of the May 16, 2017 LWV Forum on the Mental Health Care of Winnebago County's children in District 205 and discussion if we need follow up program.
- Goals for Health Committee for this fiscal year

Schedule for remainder of year 2017

LWV Health Committee meetings

**Time 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.**

**Date: 2nd Thursday of the month**

@ Culvers, 235 Phelps Ave. Rockford, 61108

No meeting in August, will meet September 14, October 12, November 9, and December 14, 2017

## Local Government Report

The Local Government Committee, along with AAUW, is hosting a program on Human Trafficking on Tuesday, **September 26th, 2017, from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm**, at the North Suburban Library, 6340 North Second Street, Loves Park, IL 61111.

The event is open to the public and is posted on Eventbrite. You are welcome and encouraged to confirm your attendance.

Please join us! The content of program is uneasy to watch, yet necessary in order to process the depth of this issue in our community.

As always, members are welcome to join our meeting the second Wednesday of each month at Noon at Katie's Cup. Our next meeting will be held on **September 13<sup>th</sup>**.

## Immigration Report

First item on the Committee's Agenda was the Ethnic Heritage Festival in Midtown on Sunday, August 27, 2017. The Board approved our involvement in this event. It begins at 12 noon and ends at 6PM. The League will have a table for general League information and membership. Voter Services Chair, Susan Janson, helped the League to arrange for a table for Voter Registration at Katie's cup during the festival. There will be signs announcing this and there will be interpreters on hand to help with any language problems. Jo, Sarah and Teresa will be there at 11 to help with setup. Teresa and Sarah are Deputy Registrars and will take the first shift to register voters. We will get information to the immigrant groups and remind them that they need two forms of ID to register.

We will need to ask for more volunteers at the registration table; it would be ideal to do 3 two hour shifts. If you are a trained Deputy Registrar with the League, we would welcome your assistance. Please let Susan Janson know if you plan to help.

We will send info to the RRStar events section. There will be a parade at 1 and we will have stickers and candy for the kids. The stickers will say, "Future voter".

The next item was discussion of the Welcoming City Ordinance. The city has a draft ready but has not decided on a date to release it. It would be great if we could get both the City and County Board to pass the Welcoming Proclamation. Committee members will talk to some County Board members to gauge the support for such a Proclamation.

The Trust Act will pass August 28, automatically, unless Rauner vetoes it before. The word is, he will not veto it. There will be a Press Conference August 31st at the Zeke Giorgi State Building, praising passage of the Trust Act. State Senator Steve Stadelman and Representative Leticia Wallace will attend along with representatives from immigrant groups. Committee chair Jo Minor will represent LWVGR.

The last item discussed was the connection between the hate groups that marched in Charlottesville and the demonization of immigration that is prevalent in certain segments of our country. Sara gave a brief overview. In 1921 Congress passed an Immigration bill that restricted immigration and gave preference to Europeans. In 1924, Congress barred Asian and African groups, further restricting immigration. The 1920s saw the rise of the KKK. There were 200,000 members in Illinois. The restricting of immigration and the rise of the KKK went hand in hand. Congressman Tom Cotton(R- Arkansas) has introduced a bill in Congress to restrict immigration to those who speak English and have a job here in a profession we need. It is being called the RAISE Act and is very similar to the Legislation that was passed in the 1920s.

The last item discussed was the October 17th meeting which will be an immigration meeting. We decided it should be an educational forum and will try to get a staff person from Senator Durbin's office. Senator Durbin is a key supporter of comprehensive immigration reform and the Dreamers Act. We will also reach out to Kim Reed the State League Immigration Chair and Fred Tsao who did an excellent job at our ICE detention forum. Next meeting 1st Thursday, **September 7th** at Meg's.

## Sunshine Report

Please remember to send Alice Heath information about League members whom we might wish to send a congratulatory, get well, condolences or other type of note.

## Voter Services Report

The next Voter Services committee meeting is at 9:30 on September 7th at Stockholm Inn.

## Campaign Finance Reform Report

The chair is vacant. If you are interested, please contact Claire.

The purpose of the LWVGR shall be to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to act on selected governmental issues.

It's easy to stay connected to the League:

**Email:**

lwwgr22@gmail.com

**Facebook:**

LeagueofWomenVotersofGreaterRockfordIllinois  
(one word)

**Twitter**

#LWVGR

**Website:**

<http://www.lwvgr.org>

Event and meeting calendar available.

**Listserver:**

LWVGR has a private email listserver for members only. If you have an email change, email to: [janiewc@mac.com](mailto:janiewc@mac.com).

**Newsletter mailing list:**

If you prefer to receive mailed copies of the VOTER newsletter, just pay the \$12.00 fee.

Go the website and the option is on the membership renewal page.

**Paypal:**

You can now join/renew on our website, using the mail form or Paypal! You can also make donations using Paypal.

**Tell your friends!**

Do you know someone who might be interested in joining?

Please introduce them to our social media.

**LWVGR Mailing Address:**

4990 East State Street  
Rockford, IL 61108

**Don't miss this upcoming event!**



**LWVIL  
State of the State  
luncheon**

**October 11**

**Union League Club in  
Chicago**

**Details to follow**



**League Statement on Charlottesville**

Washington, DC – League of Women Voters president Chris Carson issued the following statement following the horrific acts by white supremacists in Virginia this weekend: "Yesterday the world watched in horror as white supremacists gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia. There is no place for hatred and violence in our democracy and all leaders must condemn these acts of domestic terrorism. We must send a strong message that while the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly are some of our most cherished rights and must be protected, those rights do not extend to what we witnessed yesterday. The League of Women Voters stands in solidarity with the victims of violence in Charlottesville against white supremacism."

Contact: Sarah Courtney | 202-263-1332 | [scourtney@lwv.org](mailto:scourtney@lwv.org) and