



# Voice

Founded in 1959

Membership representing 15 suburbs

December, 2006

## Election Sweep Filters Down to Local Races

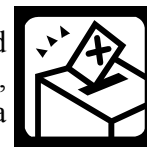
On November 11th, Professor Deron Schreck from Moraine Valley Community College gave the League of Women Voters of the Palos-Orland Area a review of results of the November 7th election. Mr. Schreck is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the college and he is currently working on his PhD and focusing on the morality of politics in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. Calling election day his "Super Bowl," Mr. Schreck says he enjoys getting his students involved in current elections. He likes waiting for results to be returned, and this year he knew the winners by ten o'clock.

The backlash on the National scene filtered down to state and local races and some good Republicans were swept up in the anti-incumbent wave. The national movement against the Republicans and the war was so strong that three Republicans who voted against the war lost their race. The Mark Foley scandal in Congress and corruption scandals contributed to the wave. There is no private life for a public official.

Professor Schreck believes that the Republicans would have done better if Donald Rumsfeld had resigned earlier. The Democrats ran on the platform of not being the same old Republicans. Rahm Emmanuel sought out Democrats who supported the war and were slightly conservative. The winners were pro-life, pro guns and ran on not being corrupt. A few Republicans who were considered safe lost their seats. There were some surprising upsets but the

results of this election sent a strong message to President Bush about the war. The professor believes we will see a struggle for power over the next two years with the Primary weeding out the crowd.

On the State scene, the Governor and the Green Party candidate, Rich Whitney, were the big winners. Judy Baar Topinka didn't have the financial base to work against the negative ads coming from Rod Blagojevich. The Green Party was a winner because they did receive enough votes to be on the ballot for the next election. The Republican Party will have to build up again in Illinois and find younger candidates. Lots of campaign money and lack of debates along with negative campaigning seems to be a good recipe. Although the general public hates the negative campaigning, it is not likely to stop any time soon because it works and the public buys into it.



**Voters send a strong message**

On the County level, many were surprised at the numbers in the suburbs supporting Todd Stroger. The branding of Tony Peraica as a "George Bush Republican" worked very well.

When asked if people should encourage newspapers and TV stations to refuse the negative ads, Professor Schreck answered that the news business often makes large profits from those campaigns and they don't want to pass that up. The professor also admitted he took a pass on that long list of judges.

### Special Immigration Issue

Page 2 - Immigration Challenges and Opportunities (Jobs and Housing)

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The LWVPO will have an in-depth review of Immigration at the January 13th Meeting.

Learn More - Bring your questions - Get the Facts

# Immigration - Challenges and Opportunities

In the second phase of the Immigration Study the League takes a look at how Illinois responds to the challenges and opportunities of immigration. We get a close look into how immigration impacts housing, jobs, health care, education, economics and government practices and how those things impact the immigrants.

## Housing:

Affordable housing is becoming hard to find for many citizens as well as illegal immigrants. Affordable housing is defined as a place to live that can be rented or owned for 30% of the gross family income. In some parts of the Country, including Illinois, the cost of finding a home is fast exceeding the ability of many to pay for those housing costs. The price of land and homes has risen significantly in the last several years to outpace the rise in wages and income.

In a 2005 study done by Chicago Metropolitan 2020 and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus called "Homes for a Changing Region," it is estimated that by the year 2030 the regional population will grow by 24% including an estimated growth of 300,000 immigrants. Most of that growth will happen in the region's outer counties, with Will County expected to double while Kane and McHenry counties may see over 70% growth. This is not just a result of immigration but a trend in general population. Immigrants often find housing by word of mouth and through connections with friends and families who have arrived at an earlier time, as well as where the jobs are available. With the lack of housing options, sometimes families double up in overcrowded housing. Both undocumented and documented immigrants are often taken advantage of by an unscrupulous landlord who knows they will not take action to defend themselves or report the landlord to the authorities.



## Jobs

According to an October 2002 report published by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the top six Illinois Counties with the highest percentage of immigrants are Cook, Kane, DuPage, Lake, Champaign and Cass Counties. Immigrants are increasingly avoiding the City and coming directly to the suburbs. The same study showed that immigrants contribute more to the local economy than they consume. A 2002 study by UIC estimates that 70% of undocumented workers pay taxes and 65% do not file tax returns.

It is estimated that immigration accounted for 55% of Illinois population growth in the 1990s, and that immigrants stabilized a population exodus to the southern and western states. Immigration in Illinois has also had a significant impact on the availability of labor. Nationwide, 14% of the workforce is composed of immigrant labor. Each immigrant group has different employment skills. Mexican immigrants are primarily unskilled, less educated, and younger, with 50% having no English proficiency. The European immigrant is generally more skilled, better educated, older and has English language skills. Asian immigrants are by far the most highly skilled, have high English proficiency, and 54% possess a college degree. In general, Mexican immigrants tend to work in low wage industries such as service and day labor jobs; the Polish immigrants are more skilled, often working in the trades; and the Asians work in technical and managerial capacities.

While Illinois employers benefit from cheap labor without responsibility for benefits, wages earned by immigrants contribute to the local economy of the communities they reside in. They also contribute roughly 3 million dollars yearly to a social security fund they will never use.

## Membership in the League of Women Voters of the Palos-Orland Area

Founded in 1959, the League of Women Voters of the Palos-Orland Area is a non-partisan organization which encourages citizens to play an active role in government at local, state and national levels. The League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

General Meetings are held on the second Saturday of the month at 9:00 AM with some exceptions

Any person of voting age may join. For membership information, please contact Mary Nebor at 708-479-8309.

The *Voice* is published nine times per year by the League of Women Voters of the Palos Orland Area, P. O. Box 86, Palos Heights, Illinois 60463.

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Illinois Student Vote: [www.Illinoisstudentvote.org](http://www.Illinoisstudentvote.org)

## Voice of the Co-President

.....By Barbara Pasquinelli

Dear Friends,

We find ourselves in the beginning of the holiday season and, outside of the weather, it's generally a happy place to be. It's a time of giving, celebrating, reflecting and a time full of traditions. One of League's best traditions is the annual December "fireside" meeting. In the beginning, it was a board meeting in someone's home around a fireplace. It's grown to become a general meeting with delicious dishes prepared by our members and featuring an interesting speaker or other home-grown entertainment. Last year's skit about oldster-type election judges was hilarious until I became one in March and November!

This year we have invited a judge of the criminal court to tell us all about his experiences at 26th and California and the road to judgeship. Judge Stanley Sacks was "my" judge when I served on a jury last June. I know you'll find his comments interesting as well as informative.

We've had a few interesting field trips recently. On November 23rd a group traveled to the Juvenile Detention Facility on a tour arranged by the Cook County League. I'll ask those ladies to give us their impressions of that trip. I attended the Cook County League meeting which featured a vice-president of Sequoia, the company which provided the Cook County voting machines. I'll tell you about that as well.

So....if you've been in League for a while, you know how special the December meeting is. If you've not been able to join us in the past, please try to come this year. Call Charlene to let her know what delicious dish you'll bring and I'll see you there. I am bringing my chocolate fountain! Guests are welcome, too.

Barbara



### *Report from Lake Michigan Interleague*

Lake Michigan Interleagues held its annual conference in Milwaukee on October 6 and 7, 2006. Members from the states surrounding Lake Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin, attended the meeting which used the theme "Connecting the Drops."

Dr. Rebecca Klaper, a scientist from the UW-Milwaukee spoke of her recent research with emerging contaminant pharmaceuticals that were identified in fish from waters of local rivers and Lake Michigan. Her studies with fat-head minnows indicate that the pharmaceuticals found in Lake Michigan fish, particularly estrogen and Prozac, decreased the sexual responses of the fish. Further studies are needed to see what affect eating these fish or drinking the water with these phar-

maceuticals will have on people.

Another speaker, Kevin Shafer, from the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewer District reviewed the history of MMSD and discussed storm water run-off, the profitability of waste, and limitation of contaminants at the source point. He spoke of a program for residents to bring unused prescription medicines for proper disposal that keeps them out of the sewage system. This successful program will be repeated in the spring of 2007.

The MMSD also produces a biofertilizer called Milogranite that is made from sewage and raises over five million dollars of income yearly.

Let's all remember that fish have a sex life and they need to be alert to swim, so please don't dispose of your old medicines in the toilet.



### Mercury Pollution

Another serious contaminant in our environment is mercury. In January of 2006, Governor Blagojevich proposed the Illinois Mercury Rule, which requires power plants to install mercury control technology by 2009. It was approved by the Illinois Pollution Control Board in November and now awaits approval by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR).

Coal fired power plants emit more than 71 percent of our in-state mercury pollution. Available technologies can capture 90 percent of that pollution before it leaves the smokestack at an estimated cost of less than one percent of utility industry revenues.

Developing fetuses and children are particularly at risk from power plant mercury pollution. Even low-level exposure can impede brain development and cause learning disabilities. Senator Maggie Crotty is on this committee and we have been seeking her support in approving this rule.

# Immigration Facts - Education

How does immigration impact our local schools?

## Education:

Several school districts in Illinois were contacted by committee members to answer interview questions on how immigration was impacting their schools. Information was also received from the Illinois State Board of Education and the Census Bureau. They found that the number of immigrants has been increasing, with the greatest percentage coming from Mexico, and this does put stress on our schools and communities. Laws in the U.S. give the same rights for a free public education to immigrants and non-English speaking students as they give to U.S. citizens. Most of the Mexican immigrants arrive in the U.S. with limited or no English skills. Many have not received a high school education in their home land and many have had no opportunity for a formal education. This lack of communication skills limits economic opportunities. The children of the immigrants, although many are born in the U.S., seldom access their citizen's rights benefits, such as food stamps and health care, and often live in poverty. Lower income families are a significant risk factor for poor school performance.

Immigrants have a greater need for programs such as preschool and Headstart. The No Child Left Behind Act poses a true challenge for all schools with high numbers of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Educators know that language skills are learned quicker by younger children and these students will help the school improve test scores as they get older. High School students who enter the country at an older age have larger challenges. Due to the language barrier, these students do not blend as well with other students and are often isolated. In addition there is often pressure on the high school student to quit school and get a job to help with the family income. For those who do graduate, college may be out of the question.

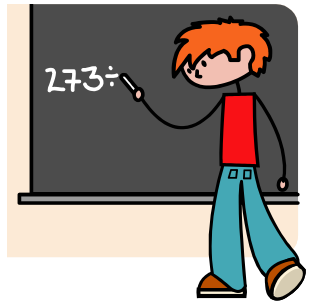
In May of 2003, Illinois was the seventh state in the nation to pass a law that allows undocumented immigrants to qualify for in-state tuition at public colleges if they have graduated from an Illinois high school and have lived in Illinois for three or more years. They must also state in an affidavit that they will become a permanent resident as soon as eligible. While half of LEP students attend Chicago schools, the Illinois State Board of Education reports there has been a recent growth in LEP students for downstate schools as well as the collar county school districts.

Schools also struggle to hire enough Non-English speaking teachers. One-third of the public school districts in the state have bilingual programs and it is expected that by the year 2009 over 5,700 teachers will be needed to work with LEP students. The biggest staffing need is for native language translators and history suggests that recruitment of teachers with appropriate certificates will be difficult. Schools are working hard to make sure they provide the best programs and adequate assistance for their immigrant students. They work to help Non-English families find resources and social services through community organizations and churches. These families often need help with healthcare, adequate housing and food assistance. The goal is a better future for these immigrants and a way to become self sufficient through education and economic opportunity. The main problem for our schools is the additional costs for these programs when they are struggling to fund their basic education program.

Of the schools mentioned in the LWVIL study, the schools in our region with the highest numbers of immigrants are in Blue Island and Burbank. The most common LEP student language in Illinois is Spanish (80.1%) and the second is Polish (4.3%).

School districts interviewed included Cicero, Collinsville, Highland Park and Chicago. Their comments included concerns on high mobility due to large numbers of apartments and multi-family homes and encouraging the high school student to stay in school till graduation. One district uses alumni to talk to the students about goals after graduation. Concerns about assistance for low income families were noted by all.

The top ten countries of origin for children served by Immigrant Education Programs are: Mexico, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Philippines, Russia, El Salvador, Haiti, China, Poland and Jamaica. Current surveys show 11,565,000 foreign-born residents living in the USA, many with low skills that impede the earning of a living wage. While immigrant families share the dream of a better life in a new country, their level of education will determine the quality of that life.



# Immigration Facts - Health Care

Access to healthcare is a major issue for many individuals and families in the Country and immigrants are 2 1/2 times more likely to be uninsured than those born in the U.S.

We know that many employers find it cost prohibitive to offer health insurance to workers whether or not they are citizens. While many believe that immigrants represent a large portion of the growing uninsured, an Urban Institute study concludes that "Immigration trends are not responsible in large part for the increase in numbers of uninsured in this Country." They credit the economy and labor markets for the growth.

Many immigrants do not make use of preventative care opportunities and they do not use emergency rooms because of the great cost. They do not have the funds leftover after meeting their basic needs, and they may have trouble getting to clinics due to lack of transportation. They also have a wariness of too much exposure to the public as an immigrant and often have difficulty finding a provider willing to care for low income families without insurance. There are services available to immigrants but many are not aware of them.

As is the case in the general U.S. population, the lack of preventative care often leads to advanced disease with much higher costs. Conditions such as high blood pressure and

diabetes and even tuberculosis need to be monitored and managed. One major resource in Illinois is the KID CARE/FAMILY CARE program. This gives primary healthcare to families with children and has given relief to the emergency treatment centers. There are also a multitude of clinics available, with a co-pay policy, many on a sliding scale. There is also help available through various health departments and certain screenings are done in the public schools.

Dental, hearing, vision help and mental health treatments are very sparse. Domestic violence and depression often go untreated. Cultural issues sometimes cause females to avoid professional care and this can also be the cause of avoiding treatment by a male doctor for some females. Prescription medicines are often difficult to access but doctors and clinics are able to offer samples for short-term treatment.

Language barriers can interfere with healthcare and translators are often not available. Healthcare providers are generally very willing to provide their help to immigrants as they feel a responsibility to society. Reimbursement from the state is usually very late which provides a hardship for the clinics.

Another problem for immigrants seeking affordable healthcare is the use of local policies preventing alternatives for provider care such as the use of mid-wives and nurse practitioners. Affordable healthcare is a common need for many people living in Illinois and this includes citizens and immigrants alike.

Access to transportation, language barriers, racial profiling, housing discrimination, and access to healthcare are identified as key problems for immigrants residing in the suburbs. Many of these issues are similar to those faced by native-born residents. Some of the recommendations that would improve life for this population are: to accept alternative forms of identification to permit access of undocumented immigrants the right to drive, have auto insurance and use credit markets; promote fair housing ordinances; develop trust between immigrants and law enforcement; delivery of cultural medical service to underserved immigrant communities; provide bilingual education for non-English speaking students and encourage parental involvement; increase the pool of teachers who are bilingual and improving access to adult English as Second language programs with an emphasis on job training.

**Fireside Potluck Dinner - December 13, 2006 - 6:30 PM**

**Lake Katherine Clubhouse - 7400 Lake Katherine Drive**

**Guest Speaker: Judge Stanley Sacks**



► RSVP to Charlene Otero 361-4285 by December 10th ◀

Donations for the Conlon Children's Room at the Markham Courthouse:  
small toys, puzzles, board games, DVD's, dolls, trucks, Sponge Bob & Disney



December, 2006


Special Issue on Immigration

Postage for this newsletter has been underwritten by



## LWVPO Upcoming Events - Mark your Calendar

Clip and Save 

- |          |    |   |  |
|----------|----|---|--|
| December | 13 | Fireside Potluck Dinner - 6:30 PM - Lake Katherine Clubhouse *<br>7400 Lake Katherine Drive, Palos Heights - Donations for Conlon Children's Room<br>Guest Speaker: Judge Stanley Sacks<br><b>"Our Judicial System and Personal Experiences in the Courtroom"</b> |  |
|          | 16 | <b>Happy Hanukkah</b>   |  |
|          | 25 | <b>Merry Christmas</b>  |  |
|          | 26 | <b>Happy Kwanzaa</b>  |  |
| January  | 13 | Immigration Presentation - Palos Heights Library - 9:30 AM<br>Learn the facts and myths about immigration in Illinois   | <b>Happy New Year!</b>   |
|          | 17 | Board Meeting at Gayle Greenwald's Home - 7:30PM<br>12200 Cheyenne Drive, Palos Heights   |  |
| February | 10 | Immigration Study Consensus Meeting - Palos Heights Library - 9:30 AM<br>Final phase of Immigration Study - Forming LWVIL position on the Issue   |  |
|          | 14 | Board Meeting at Carol Stefan's Home - 7:30 PM<br>13 Lake Katherine Drive, Palos Heights  |  |
| March    | 10 | Review of Education Funding Reform - Palos Heights Library - 9:30 AM  |  |

\* Membership Books will be available at the Fireside Dinner 😊