

The Bulletin

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September, 2012

Important Dates at a Glance:

September 27, 2012	6:30	Edwardsville City Hall Council Chambers <i>Membership Fall Kick-off</i>
	7:00	<i>Informational Meeting: Home Rule & Energy Aggregation</i>
October 2, 2012	7:00	Monthly Board Meeting at the home of Ellen Nordhauser
October 4, 2012	7:00	Glen Carbon Senior Citizens Center <i>Meet & Greet candidates for County offices</i>
October 13, 2012	2-4:30	Main Street Community Center <i>Meet & Greet candidates for County Board & Judges</i>
November 2, 2012		<i>Mock election at Edwardsville High School</i>
November 15, 2012	7:00	Edwardsville Public Library <i>Presentation on Illinois Pension Systems followed by Consensus Discussion</i>

Save the Date:

2013 Annual Meeting, May 2, LeClaire Room at the N.O.
Nelson Complex, Lewis and Clark Community College

National Presidential Debates on TV

There will be three Presidential debates on TV during October. Mark your calendar for the following - The debate at 8 pm Central Time on Wednesday, October 3 will focus on domestic policy. The Tuesday, October 16 debate at 8 pm Central Time will be a town meeting format focusing on foreign and domestic policy. The Monday October 22 debate at 8 pm Central Time will focus on foreign policy. There will be one Vice-Presidential debate, at 8 pm Central Time on October 11, which will focus on domestic and foreign policy. Each debate will be broadcast live on ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC, as well as all cable news channels including CNN, Fox News and MSNBC among others. Each debate will be streamed live online as well.

Upcoming LWVEA Fall Events

On September 27th, the League will sponsor a Membership Kickoff/ Informational meeting. This will take place at City Hall. At 6:30 p.m. members are invited to bring prospective members for a social half hour in which cookies and coffee will be served and any questions answered. The public is invited to join us at 7:00 for two speakers in the City Council Chambers, who will address the referenda which will appear on the November ballot. Paula Nixon of Ameren will address the League and the public at 7:00 pm on the subject of Community Aggregation. Jamie Bowden, Glen Carbon City Administrator, will also be there to answer any questions relating to the village's experience with Aggregation. Jeff Berkbigler, Edwardsville City Attorney, will speak at 7:30 to describe the Referendum on Home Rule.

On October 4th, Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m. the League will host a Candidate Meet and Greet for the County Official Candidates, at the Glen Carbon Senior/Community Center. Candidates for County Circuit Clerk, State's Attorney, Auditor, Recorder, Coroner and Board Chairman are invited to present their positions to the voters, with time remaining for informal questions over coffee and cookies.

On October 13th, Saturday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. there will be a Candidate Meet and Greet for the candidates for County Board and the judges in contests and seeking retention. This will take place at the Edwardsville Main Street Community Center on North Main Street (formerly called Senior Center).

STATE PENSIONS: WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Many people in Illinois are asking the question: why should I care about state pensions? I don't have immediate family, relatives or friends who work for the state, therefore, the pension systems are no concern of mine. Let's think about that.

Recently, the state of Illinois financial rating has been lowered to A from A+ which will make it more difficult for the State to borrow money to meet its financial obligations and will lead to higher interest rates when the State does borrow money. Why would financial institutions lend money to the State of Illinois that has one of the worst financial ratings of all 50 states? For many years, maybe as many as fifty years, the State has under funded its contributions to the pension systems. The scheduled contributions to the pension systems have been used to fund other programs, thereby, avoiding cutting programs or raising taxes to pay for them. There seems to be a consensus that the pension systems are major contributors to the State's financial difficulties because so much money is owed to them.

During the most recent legislative session some solutions to the pension crises have been proposed but no plan has been adopted. Most of the focus has been on the teachers' pension system because it is the largest but there are four other pension systems to consider. The LWVIL has gathered information from the Illinois pension system and pension systems of fourteen other states representing different regions of the country. At our November 15th meeting information will be presented for discussion leading to consensus recommendations. *Some* of the potential changes in the pension systems to be considered are: reduce cost of living benefits, requiring school districts to fully fund teachers' pensions, cutting pension benefits, establishing a tax on services and applying Illinois state tax to all retirement income. Guess who will pay if some of these options are adopted? Please review the information included in this Bulletin and then attend the November 15th consensus meeting. By reaching a consensus with the other Leagues in Illinois, we can make our voices heard during the upcoming legislative session. Through lobbying by the LWVIL we can influence legislation. Don't miss this chance!

Submitted by Carol Reinking

MOCK ELECTION at Edwardsville High School

The LWVEA will sponsor a Mock Election (for President only) at Edwardsville High School on Friday, November 2. All 2,500 students will vote during the first period class, and results will be available to the press for the Saturday or Monday newspapers.

District 7 Board of Education

Observed by Meg Oberlag

May 14, 2012 – Dr. Hightower announced that a 3-year contract with the secretarial employees has been finalized. There will be a salary freeze in the 1st year (2nd year in a row) and then a 2% raise in each of the two remaining years. There will also be no reduction in force during the contract.

In order to comply with the Healthy Hunger Free Act of 2010 it was necessary to increase the price of school lunches by 10 cents. Failure to do so would cost the District \$500,000 in federal funds. Lunch will now be \$2.00 at the elementary schools and \$2.10 in grades 6 through 12.

State funding for 2011-12 is still 1.6 million short as of today and there will probably be no third and fourth payments. Word has been received that the Equalized Assessed Value in our District is down which will cause a decrease of \$250,000 coming from property taxes. Some of Gov. Quinn's suggestions would hit our District hard if approved. (Correction from April Bulletin: District 7 covers 185 square miles.) If transportation funding is eliminated it would call for drastic measures! The Board is committed to no deficit spending, no Tax Anticipation Warrants and no increase in our tax rate, although ours is the lowest in the area.

It was reported that our Student Services/Special Education Department received an excellent report from a recent State visit and is in compliance with all rules. There were 712 students served by 200 professionals this year.

District 7 Board of Education

Observed by Meg Oberlag

June 18, 2012 – The owner of the Goddard School made a long statement of objection to the District's plan to start offering tuition-based Pre-K classes this fall. His main complaint was that it was too hastily decided and that the District was not qualified to do it. He called the Supt. "arrogant" and asked the Board members who they were elected to serve. Two other childcare providers added brief (but more polite) comments.

In response to this, Supt. Hightower told why they were doing it. Some of his main points were that this is another way to enhance our dwindling revenue, and it is perfectly legal to do it as shown by a previous court case and the fact that other

schools in Illinois and Missouri offer the same thing. He also said that we started offering Pre-K sixteen years ago, but gradually phased it out when funding dried up.

The remainder of the meeting centered on routine business, including the 7-0 vote to go ahead with plans to start offering Pre-K classes this fall.

District 7 Board of Education

Observed by Meg Oberlag

August 13, 2012 – This meeting drew a large crowd of teachers and parents due to the looming threat of a teachers' strike. Board president Greg Roosevelt gave introductory comments. His main points were: we began to address financial problems four years ago, we support Supt. Hightower and the administrators who work to solve the dilemma, we will not ask taxpayers for an increased rate and we will not go into deficit spending.

Then twelve people each gave 3-minute talks about the situation – two who supported the Board, two who asked for compromise, and eight who sided with the teachers. Two of the latter group said the community would be willing to pay higher taxes.

Supt. Hightower gave an overview of the financial situation that already caused the District to cut twelve million in the last four years. The Working Cash Fund, from which we can borrow without interest, has already been drawn down from 9 million to 2 million. We expect two to three more difficult years ahead. Governor Quinn's proposal to shift pension funding to the districts would mean an additional seven million of cost for us.

August 20, 2012 – Your observer was unable to watch this meeting, but the press reported that a settlement had been reached. The teachers accepted a one-year pay freeze and the Board adjusted class size and other wording.

**League of Women Voters Edwardsville Area
BOX 841
Edwardsville, IL 62025-0841**



The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The goal of the League of Women Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide. Membership is open to any U.S. Citizen who is at least 18 years of age. Dues of \$60.00 (\$85 for two members) include membership in our local, state and national organization. Send your check to Treasurer, LWVEA, P.O. Box 841, Edwardsville, IL 62025-0841