**Annual Report of the Voter Service Committee**

**of the League of Women Voters of Cook County**

**May, 2021 – April, 2022**

The Voter Service Committee resumed meeting in the fall of 2021 and continues in high gear as we approach the June 28 primary. The Proposed Areas of Focus for this Committee, as approved at the Cook County League’s May 2021 Annual Meeting have been:

1. Educating citizens on sources of voting information through the LWVCC website at [www.lwvcookcounty.org](http://www.lwvcookcounty.org) and other means.
2. Continue to review and evaluate the new election equipment and process.

Based on what we did and learned in this past year, we found ourselves refining our focus and thus we are proposing the following for 2022-23:

1. Educate voters in general, and Cook County Local Leagues in particular, on election information and the County offices, candidates, and County-wide referenda for upcoming elections.
2. Work with the Cook County Clerk’s election division and the Chicago Board of Elections to improve the voting process for all Cook County voters.

This report is organized along the proposed program for this next year.

**Educate voters in general, and Cook County Local Leagues in particular, on election information and the County offices, candidates, and County-wide referenda for upcoming elections.**

* The Committee in early March provided Cook County Suburban Leagues’ voter service chairs with information learned from the County Clerk’s office (including a contact person for the Leagues), following up on the recommendations previously made by the Committee to the Clerk’s office in January of 2021. The information provided also included what is being continued from the temporary 2020 election changes (drop boxes for mail-in ballots, voting centers on Election Day, and Nov. 8 being a State holiday), as well as what is new (applying for permanent vote-by-mail status).
* The Committee arranged a Zoom meeting on April 11 with Cook County Suburban Leagues’ voter service chairs in order for the Assistant Deputy Clerk of Elections to go through all the information contained on the Clerk’s Election web pages. The meeting was recorded and the link has been provided to all voter service chairs whether or not they attended.
* In April, the Committee provided the Suburban Leagues information about the candidates for Cook County and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District offices and a list of which Leagues’ areas are in which County Board and Board of Review districts (so Leagues can partner on candidate forums). The Committee also offered to assist with publicity for any such forums and to assist by providing questions for the candidates.
* Also in April, the Committee is setting up a townhall in May for all the Suburban Leagues’ voter service chairs and the Cook County Clerk’s office to go over specifics of Vote-by-Mail, Early Voting, and Voting on Election Day.
* The Committee has confirmed that WTTW will again have a Video Voter’s Guide for the June 28 Primary that the League will help sponsor.

**Work with the Cook County Clerk’s election division and the Chicago Board of Elections to improve the voting process for all Cook County voters:**

* The Committee prepared comments that the League submitted to the Cook County Board in support of the Clerk’s proposal to reduce the number of voting precincts by merging multiple precincts at the same polling place. This was allowed because of a change in Illinois Law that raised the maximum number of registered voters for each precinct in recognition that more and more voters are using Early Voting and Vote-by-Mail. The advantages identified by the League included:
  + reduction in voters’ confusion and wasted time standing in line to check in with election judges for the wrong precinct at the polling place
  + more precincts having a full complement of election judges due to a reduction in the total number of judges needed, resulting in a more efficient and less stressful election day for judges and voters alike
  + reduction in costs on Election Day (an estimate of $200,00) that can help offset increased costs for Early Voting and Vote-by-Mail
* This proposed reduction was approved by the County Board in December, 2021, and is effective with the June 28 primary.
* The Chicago Board of Elections plans to make a similar reduction in precincts after the ward redistricting process is finalized.

Members of the Voter Service Committee: Carolyn Cosentino, Diane Edmundson, Helene Gabelnick, Georgia Gebhardt, Jennifer Manning, Nancy Marcus, Priscilla Mims, and Cynthia Schilsky