

Annual Report of the Voter Service Committee of the League of Women Voters of Cook County May 2025 – April 2026

This Annual Report is organized pursuant to the two aspects of the approved Program for 2025-26. Three new initiatives described below are: (1) Vote411.org work; (2) Partnership with Greater Chicago Food Depository; and (3) Expansion of ways to return Vote-by-Mail ballots.

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

- VOTE411.org: Organized a meeting with all Cook County Local Leagues to divide up responsibilities among the many races for the Primary in September.
 - Took responsibility for all the Cook County government and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) candidates, along with the judicial candidates for the March 17 Primary.
 - Spent many hours starting last summer attending the LWVIL-sponsored “Office Hours” and with the manual. Lisa Slankard took responsibility for loading all the information into VOTE411 for our Committee.
 - Committee members spent many hours finding email addresses to use to reach candidates and following up to obtain responses.
 - Successful result: Out of 54 candidates among 3 political parties, obtained responses from 49! Just missing 1 Democratic and 4 Republican candidates running unopposed.
 - Note: League’s Budget & Structure Group reviewing responses after election to obtain candidates’ ideas for possible follow-up.
- Partnership with Greater Chicago Food Depository: Along with Chicago League, entered into a partnership agreement for a pilot project to register and educate voters at food pantry sites about why and how to vote. Planning now to continue and expand for November election to more sites. Will be contacting applicable local Leagues once those sites are identified.
- Worked with the Cook County Newsletter/Web Master to provide voter information on who was running for the Cook County government and MWRD offices in the March 2026 Primary, as well as providing information on (1) registering to vote, (2) vote-by-mail, (3) early voting, and (4) election day voting for the Primary election.
- Regularly reviewed the Cook County Clerk’s and Chicago Board of Elections’ web sites to obtain information and share with the Local Leagues’ voter service people via emails and voters in general via the web site.

- Organized meeting of all Local League voter service people with Cook County Deputy Clerk for Elections in January to provide information on Primary, and sent follow-up notes to the Local Leagues.

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

- Expand ways to return Vote-by-Mail ballots: Because of changes to timeliness of when the Post Office affixes postmarks and the U.S. Supreme Court case challenging Mississippi's law allowing Vote-by-Mail (VBM) ballots postmarked by election day to be counted if received within 5 days after the election, brought to the Illinois League the idea of each election authority in Illinois accepting VBM ballots at each polling place on election day.
 - Currently, Suburban Cook has 6 such locations to receive VBM ballots on election day; Chicago has 52. But the majority of voters are not within walking distance of those few locations, in contrast to the hundreds of polling place locations on election day. Using the mail even 2 weeks prior to election may no longer be a safe option to ensure vote is counted, depending on the Supreme Court ruling expected by June.
 - DuPage County does this already, but it has far fewer polling places.
 - The Illinois League is pursuing this on a state-wide basis. We have met with the Cook County Clerk's office, which is not currently supporting this. Have a meeting in May to discuss with the Chicago Board of Elections.
- Met with the Clerk's election personnel in June 2025 and shared a document with our concerns about the web site (old information and inaccurate information). Continued to raise some of the same issues with regard to accuracy (particularly dates for early voting and drop box usage) during the months leading up to the Primary. Met again in April 2026 and raised the problems. Have been told that one issue is that the web site is the responsibility of the Communications Dept. which has responsibility for all communications with the Clerk's office.

Thank you to LWVIL Voter Service Chair Roberta Borrino and to all the Local Leagues' voter service people!

Voter Service Committee Members for 2025-26: Carolyn Cosentino (Homewood/Flossmoor), Diane Edmundson (Chicago), Helene Gabelnick (Chicago), Agnes Gray (Chicago), Christine Jessee (Palatine, Barrington, & Schaumburg), Catherine Mardikes (Chicago), Pris Mims (Chicago), Karen Sandrick (Chicago), Cynthia Schilsky (LaGrange), Lisa Slankard (Arlington Heights), Ed Spire (Glenview/Glencoe), Sue Swaringen (Glenview/Glencoe)

We invite you to join us!

Email info@lwwcookcounty.org to get more information