

News from the Cook County League

The Criminal Justice Interest Group reports that it has observed judges using the new criteria for determining who is eligible for release while awaiting trial, whether it be on their own reconnaissance or on electronic monitoring. In addition, new procedures are being implemented so that those awaiting trial are not assessed bail amounts that are in excess of what they can pay. This Group has been supporting all these developments. Accordingly, the jail population is down significantly, below an average of 7,000/day. Not only does this mean that people, who have not been convicted of the crime for which they were arrested and who are not deemed dangerous, are able to keep working, but it should result in reduced amounts that taxpayers have to pay to keep them in jail.

It is budget time for Cook County Government, and one of the items that the Budget & Structure Interest Group is going to be watching to see is whether the Sheriff's budget truly reflects a reduction in costs due to the reduction in the jail population, and if not, why not. The Group is also watching to see which Cook County Commissioners attend the budget meetings and ask probing questions of departments regarding their proposed budgets and their performance. You can read the reports of the budget meetings which are scheduled to run from October 23 thru November 2 at www.lwvcookcounty.org, (look under the heading "Our Work/Eyewitness/Cook County Board Eyewitness").

Many thanks to all of you who responded to the "Time for Action" alert sent out in September asking you to contact your Cook County Commissioner and urge their active participation at budget meetings.

Submitted by Priscilla Mims