

## LWV Cook County 2017 Annual Meeting Wrap-up

By Marissa Garza

On Monday, May 8, I was privileged to represent LWVOPRF as a delegate at the League of Women Voters Cook County (LWVCC) Annual Meeting. It was a very inspiring and motivational day and I want to share my takeaways with you.

Being a new member, this was my first exposure to the work of the LWVCC. There are thirteen local leagues that comprise the LWVCC. While being a resource for these leagues the LWVCC is very active and involved in advocacy at the county level. Focusing their work around four interest groups, LWVCC aims to make strides in voter education and advocacy for citizens of Cook County. The interest groups are Budget and Structure, Criminal Justice, Health and Hospital System, and Housing Affordability and Residential Desegregation. Each interest group has their own goals for the upcoming year.

The Budget and Structure group will be working towards ensuring transparency of County and the Municipal Water Reclamation District board operations and prepare for the upcoming redistricting after the 2020 census. The Criminal Justice interest group will continue their work around bond court assessments and look at mental health issues within the Criminal Justice System. The Health and Hospital System group will keep an eye on Medicaid and insurance enrollment changes and promote league usage of their educational slide deck on the state of the Cook County Hospital System. This presentation will be made at the LWVOPRF Annual Meeting on May 23, 2017. Finally, the Housing Affordability and Residential Desegregation interest group will assess the current state of affordable housing in Cook County. If you'd like to learn more or get involved in any of these groups, please visit the LWVCC website.

Also during the LWVCC Annual Meeting, the new board was installed, which includes our own Peggy Kell as Co-President and Beverly Graham as Director. Having these two league members involved at the board level will help LWVOPRF remain connected to the issues affecting Cook County. Congratulations to them!



Finally, Cook County Commissioner, Bridget Gainer spoke to us about her work at the county level and her work with the Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA). The mission of the CCLBA as stated on their website is to acquire, hold, and transfer interest in real property throughout Cook County to: promote redevelopment and reuse of vacant, abandoned, foreclosed or tax-delinquent properties; support targeted efforts to stabilize neighborhoods; stimulate residential, commercial and industrial development- all in ways that are consistent with goals and priorities established by local government partners and other community stakeholders. Learning that Cook County had a land bank was very insightful to seeing how change can be made when focusing on the long game instead of looking for a quick fix to a problem.

For an up to date view of what is happening at County level boards, visit LWVCC's County Eyewitness page on their website. It's full of information!

I left the meeting feeling inspired and empowered. The LWVCC really is a great resource to learn about the issues facing Cook County. I'm excited to learn more about the work this league and the interests groups do throughout the year. Because of the work of the LWVCC I will be a much more informed voter next election season!