



League of Women Voters of Chicago

LWV Chicago Urges Renaming Balbo Drive

Organization will campaign to name street after Ida B. Wells Barnett

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHICAGO (September 6, 2017)--The local chapter of the League of Women Voters announces today that it will support efforts to change the name of Balbo Drive, the heavily traveled street on the lakefront, and proposes that the street bear the name of Ida B. Wells Barnett. The group is asking city residents to contact their aldermen and ask for the name change to honor the suffragist, civil rights activist and investigative journalist who was an early leader of the civil and women's rights movements, worked against segregation in Chicago's public schools and helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

"All of Chicago should know about the great work that Ida B. Wells Barnett did, and we should be inspired by her example," says Annie Logue, president of the League of Women Voters of Chicago. "2020 marks the centennial of women's suffrage in the United States. We can thank Ida B. Wells Barnett for making that possible."

Ida B. Wells Barnett was born into slavery in 1862. After attending black universities in Mississippi and Tennessee, she taught school for several years before turning to journalism to educate the public about discrimination and expose the heinous practice of lynching in her native Mississippi and other parts of the South.

After relocating from Memphis, Wells Barnett settled in Chicago and was active in the city's political, civic and cultural life. She was instrumental in creating the Alpha Suffrage Club, the first and one of the most important black female suffrage organizations, and stepped up to join the Illinois delegation in the famous 1913 march for universal suffrage in Washington, D.C. Not able to tolerate injustice of any kind, Ida B. Wells Barnett, along with Jane Addams, successfully blocked the establishment of segregated schools in Chicago. In 1930 Wells Barnett was one of the first black women to run for public office as an Illinois legislator.

Balbo Drive was christened by Mayor Edward Kelly in 1933 when a squadron of sea planes, led by Italo Balbo, landed in Lake Michigan to commemorate the Chicago World's Fair. A monument to Balbo, who helped Benito Mussolini come to power in 1922 and served as air commander for Fascist Italy in World War II, was later given to the city by Mussolini.

Several civic organizations and aldermen, including Edward Burke (14th) and Gilbert Villegas (36th), are advocating for the city to rename Balbo Drive. The League of Women Voters of Chicago joins in that effort and asks city leaders, citizens, and other civic organizations to name the street for Ida B. Wells Barnett, one of Chicago's most revered proponents of diversity, suffrage and social justice.

The League suggests that citizens who wish to join in this campaign contact their aldermen. Locate the aldermen and their contact information at:

www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/iframe/lookup_ward_and_alderman.html

The League of Women Voters of Chicago is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging informed and active participation in government. Founded in 1920, it influences public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate. Our membership is open to anyone who is interested in learning more about civic engagement and joining in our work for Chicago.

Contact

Annie Logue

League of Women Voters of Chicago

preslwgchicago@gmail.com

312-939-5949