



The Chicago Voter

League of Women Voters of Chicago
Website - www.LWVChicago.org

February 2016
Vol. 66 No. 6



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Upcoming Events

LWVChicago Board Meeting
Tuesday, February 9, 5:30 PM

Education Committee
Friday, February 12, 9:30 AM

State of the City Committee
Friday, February 12, 10 AM

Voter Service/LWVUS Program Briefing
Saturday, February 13, 10 to noon
Room 430

Social Policy/Housing Committee
Tuesday, February 16, 10 AM

Chicago in Focus
Wednesday, February 17
5 to 7 PM
Union League Club

LWVIL Issues Briefing
Saturday, February 27
Please check the web site
LWVChicago.org for additional
scheduled committee meetings.

Call 312-939-5949 or
Email: League@LWVChicago.org
For more information

President's Message

Longer days and more sunshine as we move toward spring. It's 2016 and the League of Women Voters is closer to its 100th anniversary in February 2020. There is much to celebrate and to take pride in our accomplishments, but we must look to the future.



In January, our board begins to plan the annual meeting that occurs in the following June. Our **bylaws** require that the

board appoint Budget and Bylaws Committees. We have appointed these committees, but there is room for additional members. The Budget Committee looks at our income and expenditures this program year (July to the following June) and recommends operating and education budgets for the coming program year.



The Bylaws Committee reviews the LWVChicago bylaws to ensure that they are consistent with the bylaws of the National and Illinois Leagues. The committee also recommends changes so that our **bylaws** are consistent with our current practice. Also consider **LWVUS** and **LWVIL** bylaws.

Budget and bylaws are important responsibilities. But neither requires a member to commit hours per week for months on end. Usually, the committees meet once to organize themselves and then communicate by phone and e-mail. Please consider volunteering for one of these important committees. It will introduce you to aspects of LWV that make it possible to carry out LWV's goal of self and public education.

Margaret

*Happy
Valentine's Day!*

Voter Service/LWVUS Program Planning Briefing

The Briefing for information about the March 15 Primary Election and for LWVUS Program Planning will be Saturday, February 13 from 10 to noon in Room 430. On pages 4, 5 and 6 in this **Chicago Voter** there is more information on these items.

Please RSVP, 312-939-5949 or by **email**, to be put on the building security list.

Helene Gabelnick

Chicago in Focus

On January 20, Amanda Kass, Research Director of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, presented a primer on the Chicago City Budget to about 50 attendees at **Chicago in Focus**. This series is co-sponsored by LWVChicago and the Union League Club.



Amanda Kass and LWVChicago VP Annie Logue

Kass began by reporting that the Chicago City Budget is complex and difficult to understand. This is partially because of the way the information is made available (or not available) to those of the public who would like to study and analyze it.

The Chicago property tax bill includes levies for seven taxing bodies; Chicago schools is the largest; 53.7% of the tax bill. The City of Chicago's share is 21.9%; this revenue goes to pensions and debt service.

There are four City pension systems (labor, municipal, police and fire). The Chicago Public Schools teacher's pension system is separate. The underfunding of pension funds is due to deferring payments into them. This results not only in the payment not being in the fund, but the compounded interest on this principal is lost.

The state has enacted laws to require Chicago to fund its pension system fully. The police and fire funds must be fully funded by 2040; the catch-up payments begin in 2016.

The presentation is available on as a [PDF file](#) on the LWVChicago [web site](#).

Margaret Herring

Next CiF

The State of the Neighborhoods is the topic for **CiF** on Wednesday, February 18.

Join us for an informal discussion about the state of Chicago's neighborhoods and activism. To what extent are people taking their cues from the city, and to what extent are they doing it themselves? How will the city budget affect neighborhood life? We'll talk about these and other issues with a panel of neighborhood activists including representatives from the Chicago Rehab Network and Forward Chicago. They will join others to

talk to us about what they see from their vantage point - and how citizens can get involved.

Please [RSVP](#).

Annie Logue

Annual Meeting Committees

Preparations are beginning for the LWVChicago Annual meeting scheduled for June 11. If you would like to volunteer for either the Budget or Bylaws committee, please contact [the office](#).

Social Policy/Housing Committee

At its last meeting the committee noted that the most pressing social policy issue in Illinois remains the lack of a budget and its impacts upon the social safety net. The committee also discussed Ald. Joe Moore's proposed City Council ordinance to regulate house-sharing and raise money to support affordable housing and reduce homelessness. The ordinance would impose a 2% transaction tax on such house-sharing services as AirBNB and Vacation Rentals by Owner (VRBO). The committee reviewed the renewed Campaign for A Fair (progressive) State Income Tax and its stated goal of placing the referendum on the November ballot. This is supported by LWVIL.

The Committee will meet again on Tuesday, February 16 at 10 AM.

Herb Ziegelendorf

International Women's Day



The International Trade Club of Chicago, World Chicago and the Union League Club announce their

14th Annual Chicago Celebrates International Women's Day Fair and Luncheon on March 8.

Each year there is a keynote speaker or panel who is distinguished in a field locally and often internationally. Immediately prior to the luncheon there is a fair showcasing local organizations that support women in their work.

This year's keynote speaker is Sheila Watt-Carter, a pioneer in identifying climate change issues affecting indigenous Inuit communities in the Arctic. She will share her perspective on how environmentalism and human rights in the arctic are affecting the rest of the world.

Individual tickets are \$65. For more information, and/or to register contact: [AJennings](#) or 312-254-1800x103.

Esta Kallen

LWVChicago's State of the City Luncheon

"Our City, Our Schools: Are They Working Together?"

If there ever was a city that needed close inspection, it is ours, and this is a critical year. LWVChicago will hold its State of the City luncheon on April 12 at the Union League Club from 11:30-1:30. A distinguished panel of experts in both city and school affairs will address our theme:

"Our City, Our Schools: Are They Working Together?"

Jesse Ruiz was most recently appointed President of the Chicago Park District by the Mayor. He has served both as Vice-President of the Chicago Board of Education and as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. Previously, Ruiz chaired the Illinois State Board of Education. He is a partner in the law firm of Drinker, Biddle, & Reath.

Dick Simpson is a professor of political science and former head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is also a former Chicago alderman. Simpson is the author of publications on political corruption as well as on elections, local government, budgeting, and neighborhood empowerment.

Paul Vallas is a former CEO of Chicago Public Schools and the School District of Philadelphia, as well as former Superintendent of the Bridgeport Public Schools and the Recovery School District of Louisiana. Vallas had previously directed the budget arm of the Illinois State Legislature and served as budget director under Mayor Richard M. Daley.

Our moderator is **Laura Washington**, a columnist for the **Chicago Sun-Times** and political analyst for ABC 7-Chicago. Washington was formerly the Ida B. Wells-Barnett University Professor at DePaul University in Chicago. She specializes in media-related issues, African-American affairs, local and national politics, race and racism, and social justice.

All is not well between the city's Board of Education and the communities it is supposed to serve.

The panel, led by our moderator, will explore ways to reestablish trust between the Board of Education and its communities. Here are some of the conditions that exist in Chicago, as observed by the League, that will be explored for solutions:

The Board of Education and its communities distrust one another and are at times in open hostility to one another. An appointed board, with no structural connections to the community, can make its residents feel alienated.

Because the mayor appoints all the board members and the top administrators of the Chicago Public Schools, there is a disincentive for members of the Board of Education to provide real oversight of the finances and/or the administration. Members are reluctant to ask the difficult questions.

There is no nation-wide search process to locate candidates for CEO/Superintendent with high levels of both professional skills and integrity that have been demonstrated in previous positions. Corruption at the top erodes the public trust and also negatively affects the view from Springfield.

Communities have come together in their wish to retain their neighborhood schools or to prevent other types of schools, such as charter or military schools, from being forced upon them, but to no avail. "Choice" has become a function of the market and has been achieved at the expense of community. How much should community preference count?

We want to start a conversation in Chicago about reconnecting the Board of Education to its communities, about lack of oversight over the Board, about the lack of a nation-wide search for a CEO, and about the importance to the schools and to the city of community-based solutions.

LWVChicago Members Help Needed

This State of the City event is a major fundraiser to benefit the LWVChicago Education Fund.

Volunteer with members of the State of the City committee and make a difference while deepening friendships and learning new skills. The committee itself usually meets when there is business to take care of and during the day.

If you don't have time to meet you can help by **providing** the committee with your own personal and professional lists of friends and colleagues who might be interested in attending the luncheon. We would like names and email addresses in an excel spreadsheet, if possible. They will be sent an invitation by email. Please also indicate if there are other ways you are available to be of assistance.

More information about the cost of the luncheon and how to make reservations will be emailed to you shortly, will soon be on our Web site, and in the next "Chicago Voter."

Unit Meetings

Topics: March Primary Election LWVUS Program Planning

Far Southwest Side Unit – evening

Wednesday, February 24 – 7 PM

Home of Marcia Cowing

Leaders – Marcia Cowing, Betsy Perrine

Hyde Park Unit – afternoon

Thursday, February 25 – 1:30 PM

Montgomery Place

Leaders – Susan Hamburger, Dorothy Scheff

Loop Unit – afternoon

Wednesday, February 17 – 11:30 AM to 1 PM

LWVChicago Conference Room

Leaders – Norma Braude, Carol Ziegeldorf

Loop Unit – evening

Tuesday, February 16 – 5:30 PM

LWVChicago Conference Room

Leader – Margaret Herring

Loop Unit – morning

Thursday, February 18 – 10 AM

LWVChicago Conference Room

Leader – Bernice Fortini

West Side Unit

Sunday, February 14 – 1:30 PM

Third Unitarian Church

301 N. Mayfield, Chicago

Cook County State's Attorney

Cook County Circuit Court Clerk

Cook County Recorder of Deeds

Commissioners of the Cook County Board of Review (tax appeals)

District 1 (four-year term)

District 2 (two-year term)

Supreme, Appellate, Circuit and Sub Circuit Judges (to fill vacancies if required)

Primary Election Dates

Now through Mar.10: Apply for mail ballot
return postmarked by March 15

Feb 4 – Mar. 14: Early voting at Board of Elections

Feb. 16: Last day for regular voter registration

including online at ova.elections.il.gov

Feb. 17 – Mar. 14: Grace Period registration
(must vote at same time)

Feb. 29 – Mar. 14:

Early Voting at selected sites

March 15: Election Day

Polls open 6 am to 7 pm

Vote in your precinct

Election Day Registration (NEW)

Voters may also register and vote at their polling place

Candidate Information

Official election ballots will be available after February 4, when early voting begins. You may find the list of all your districts and your sample ballot on the Chicago [Board of Elections](#) web site or phone the Board at 312-269-7900.

Video Voters' Guide

LWVCookCounty is partnering with WTTW to produce 2-minute videos accessible online of all the candidates for the State's Attorney, Clerk of the Court, Recorder of Deeds, Board of Review, and MWRD positions. When they are available there will be an email announcement.

Candidate Debates

LWVIL is working with ABC 7 to schedule and plan a debate with the candidates for the US Senate. LWVCookCounty and ABC7 are looking into the possibility of having a debate for the Cook County State's Attorney Candidates. When these are scheduled you will receive email notification.

Chicago newspapers and Vote for Judges will have candidate information in late February. Refer to their web sites.

Voter Registration

LWVChicago volunteers have been registering voters and providing election information at high schools, Roosevelt University and other venues.

Voter Service



The Illinois Primary (voters must declare a political party) Election will be on Tuesday, March 15.

To Be Elected

Delegates and alternates to serve at the national conventions

Ward Committeemen for the Democratic and Republican parties in each of the City's 50 wards

Candidates to Be Nominated

US President, US Senator

US Representatives (all districts)

Illinois State Comptroller (2-year unexpired term)

Illinois State Senators

2-year terms; Districts 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 20

4-year terms; Districts 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 28

Illinois State Representatives (all districts)

MWRD Commissioners

(3 for 6 yr term, 1 for unexpired 2-year term)

LWVUS Program Planning for 2016-2018

Every two years LWVUS asks members to consider **planning program** for the next biennium. The recommendations are considered and will be voted on at the LWVUS National Convention in June.

Following are excerpts from the available LWVUS information. They are descriptions of some of the action already taken and suggestions made by the LWVUS Program Planning Committee and the Board for plans for the 2016-2018 Program. Individual LWVs may suggest additional items and/or ask for concurrence with existing positions.

To see the entire picture, you can consider the current positions as found in **Impact on Issues**. This is a long document (83 pages) because we (as part of LWVUS) have a large number of positions in many areas. Local leagues utilize these positions and League Principles for action.

Recently there has been study and consensus on topics within Representative Government, Natural Resources, and Social Policy.

When considering the LWVUS positions as a whole, it is clear that a main goal is to *make democracy work*. Voting rights, voter protection and service, and election reform are crucial elements in achieving the goal, and the League is particularly noted for action in these areas. To more fully engage in these issues a campaign: **Making Democracy Work** has been developed.

The LWVUS Board suggests that, during program planning efforts, members strongly consider the need to act versus adding new studies or reviews to the agenda for the 2016-2018 biennium.

Key Structures of Democracy was the focus of the program adopted at the 2014 Convention for the 2014-2016 biennium. In addition to ongoing work to protect the vote and reform elections, this comprehensive program consists of

1. A study of the process of amending the United States Constitution;
2. A review and update of the League position on campaign finance in light of forty years of change since the Watergate reforms; and
3. A review of the redistricting process for the United States Congress for the purpose of developing action steps.

Key Structures of Democracy

The LWVUS Redistricting Task Force has researched the League's history regarding redistricting and has compiled the 40 existing state League redistricting positions. Based on these positions, the LWVUS Board

is **recommending a concurrence** with a broad, general statement at Convention 2016. The goal is to enable states without positions to take action and states with positions to continue to work for the reforms that their study process demonstrated works best for their voters.

Voter Protection and Service

While direct advocacy is critical to these core democracy issues, the work the League does every year in the area of voter service constitutes the front line of voter protection.

Looking Ahead to 2016 and Beyond

Overview of a Possible Program Focus: Making Democracy Work

It is now abundantly clear that our work is far from finished in *making democracy work* for every voter and every voice in our communities. From our interactions with League leaders and members, from the results of a recent member survey, and based on the political outlook for the next two years, we believe that every League will likely continue to focus resources on the core democracy issues that are part of the 2014-2016 program. The LWVUS Board believes that our 2016-2018 program should recognize this reality and do the same. The opportunities that we see over the next biennium are as follows:

The LWVUS Board's proposal for education and action in the next biennium.

Voting Rights and Voter Protection

In Congress, we must continue to push for restoration of the Voting Rights Act. We must also support reforms such as online voter registration for all, portable voter registration within each state, and reforms to provisional voting. We must continue pushing current and future administrations to comply with the National Voter Registration Act by allowing voters to register through the federally-facilitated health care exchanges.

Money in Politics

Congress can take action to reform money in politics. It can enact the Stop Super PAC-Candidate Coordination Act in the House. There is legislation on each of the pillars of our work on campaign finance: 1) disclosure, 2) stopping Super PACs, and 3) public financing of congressional and presidential elections. In addition, Congress can and must ensure meaningful enforcement of existing and future laws. The Federal Election Commission can't fix itself, but Congress surely can fix it. These reforms can be made despite recent decisions of the Supreme Court.

Continued on page 6

Program Planning continued from page 5:

Supporting Voting Rights and Voter Protection

In the states the fight continues to prevent legislation that suppresses the vote. Support also continues for reforms like online voter registration and expansion of early voting. These efforts are most successful when state Leagues can rely on LWVUS for resources in the form of shared expertise and coordination of strategies and messaging. State Leagues play a critical role, too, in developing partnerships and coalitions to protect the vote, not only in state legislatures but also in local communities.

Supporting Voting Rights and Voter Protection in Local Communities

In recent years local League voter service has joined the front lines of voter protection. The 2016 election will be the first presidential election in 50 years in which voters cannot rely on the protections of the Voting Rights Act to ensure free and fair access to the polls. Never has a local presence--real people in real communities--been a greater asset for the League. Registering voters in underserved communities, high schools, community colleges, and at naturalization ceremonies has become the primary focus of our voter service work. Long-standing relationships with elections officials have already produced good results in preventing careless or not so careless decisions regarding precinct locations and distribution of polling place resources. More is required. It is critical that we promote and support a local presence in our most vulnerable communities by working together with community partners to protect voters in the next election.

Voting Rights and Voter Protection After Election 2016

The past five years have shown that elections have important consequences for both candidates and voters. Long lines at the polls in 2012 prompted the president to appoint the Presidential Commission on Election Administration to examine best election practices from the perspective of voter experience. The resulting recommendations provide an excellent road map for election reform at state and local levels. The League and our partners will be on the ground next November, but our election observations are meaningless unless we take them back to the appropriate decision makers.

Election 2016 will be the most expensive in our history. The issue of money in politics does not end the day after an election, nor is it confined to federal elections or the federal government. It is incumbent on all of us to work at every level of government to ensure that power is in the hands of the many and not the few.

Redistricting reform continues to be a goal for the League. We look forward to more robust efforts to accomplish this goal.

In addition, given the current political climate, there will likely be continued calls to amend the US Constitution through a convention. The lessons learned through our study of the amendment process will inform LWV's education and advocacy in this area.

Health Care Report

Federal

Affordable Care Act 2016 Open Enrollment

On January 7 Health and Human Services announced that more than 11.3 million people have enrolled in private health insurance thus far during the open enrollment period for the ACA ending on January 31. This surpasses last year's enrollment, and the 10.5 million goal set by the Obama administration.

Nearly 3 million of these (about 26%) are between ages 18 and 34, an important group, because their health costs are low, and they balance the cost of older, sicker groups. About 83% of these consumers will get a subsidy for 2016, with the average about \$294/month.

Illinois

Affordable Care Act

On January 8, the Illinois Department of Insurance announced that Karen Woods is the new Director of Get Covered Illinois (GCI), the Illinois Health Insurance Marketplace. Prior to joining GCI, Ms. Woods was Executive Director of Blue Cross/Blue Shield Retail Claim Operation. During the open enrollment period for 2016, through January 2, GCI has enrolled 348,346 people in health insurance plans.

Challenge to hospitals' tax exempt status

On January 4 the Illinois 4th District Appellate Court ruled that the 2012 law defining what not-for-profit hospitals have to do to get tax breaks is unconstitutional. The ruling was in a case involving the city of Urbana and other local taxing districts brought by Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, which was seeking relief from taxes in 2004-2011. Urbana Mayor Laurel Prussing said the city has lost 11% of its assessed tax value since Carle was relieved, by the 2012 law, of paying \$6.5 million a year in property taxes--the vast majority of which went to Urbana and its school district. The ruling is yet another setback for not-for-profit hospitals, which have come under increased scrutiny in recent years over their tax exemptions. It is expected that the ruling will go to the Illinois Supreme Court.

Margaret O'Hara

LWVUS (LWV.org)

Following President Obama's State of the Union speech the President of LWVUS, Elisabeth MacNamara, said: "It is long past time to have a democracy that is truly representative of all voters. Imagine what would happen if every eligible citizen showed up at the polls. Imagine what would happen if candidates had to be more responsive to the people they represent than to the donors who fund their campaigns."

This year, millions of voters across the country will vote in the presidential primaries, which begin in just a few weeks. Unfortunately, fewer voters tend to turnout for primary elections and caucuses despite the important impact they have on who ultimately wins the race for the White House. Therefore, any increase in turnout can have a significant impact – **remind your friends and family to register to vote**, so that they can participate in the upcoming presidential primaries."

LWVUS continues to lobby and work to improve and expand Voter Registration and Election Systems.

LWVIL (LWVIL.org)

Issues Briefing

The 2016 LWVIL Issues briefing will be February 27. Its theme is "**Justice for All of Illinois.**"

There will be two plenary sessions and a choice of two of six workshops.

You may view the agenda, registration form and pay on the [LWVIL Website](#). There is also some Information on page 8 of this *Chicago Voter*.

Independent Map Amendment



Have you signed and/or circulated a petition for the Independent Map Amendment? The absolute deadline to submit them is April 29. There is a supply in the LWVChicago office. Once signed, the petitions must be notarized and then turned in at the LWVIL office.

LWVIL adopted Redistricting Reform as an action focus for 2015-2017. It is a member of [Independent Maps](#), a non-partisan statewide coalition which launched a reform campaign to fix Illinois' flawed system since in its present state, our redistricting system discourages competitive elections.

LWV Cook County (LWVCookCounty.org)

LWV Cook County has a new web site: [Check](#) it out.

Observer reports for the Cook County Board and Committees, the Cook County Health & Hospitals System, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation Board can all be found under the "County Eyewitness" banner at the top of the page.

On page 4 of this *Chicago Voter* there is information about Primary Election Materials from LWVCookCounty.

Pre-Trial Systems Report: The LWVCC Criminal Justice Interest Group completed its report with findings and recommendations for improving the Cook County criminal court pre-trial operations, include the elimination of cash bail. You can see all the recommendations and the full report, on the Criminal Justice Interest Group [page](#) of the new web site.

LWV Lake Michigan Region (LWVLMR.org)

Last year, LWVLMR encouraged members to comment on the proposed Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule. WOTUS clarifies that the Clean Water Act (CWA) applies to small streams and wetlands. The rule went into effect on August 28, 2015.

Unfortunately, states outside of the Great Lakes basin quickly filed several lawsuits challenging the rule, and the Sixth Circuit Court granted a stay on enforcement of the rule in October. The CWA has also been challenged in Congress. Several laws and amendments have been introduced that would change its breadth and administration.

Most recently, on January 13, the House passed [SJ Res 22](#), a joint resolution which would prevent its implementation. If the President vetoes this bill, his veto will probably stand.

The Chicago Voter

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|------------------|----------------|
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League of Women Voters of Illinois Annual Issues Briefing
Saturday, February 27, 2016: 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
University Center • 525 South State Street • Chicago

- 9:30 a.m. Registration and networking
10:00 a.m. Welcome
10:15 a.m. Plenary I: *Gun Violence Prevention*, **U.S. Representative Robin Kelly**
11:30 a.m. Morning Workshops
 A. *Illinois Vision 20/20: Fulfilling the Promise of Public Education*
 Dr. Roger Eddy, Executive Director, Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB)
 B. *The 2016 Redistricting Amendment – Persuading the Public That It will Make a Difference*
 Cynthia Canary, Independent Maps Amendment Campaign, Senior Advisor to the Board
 C. *Illinois Clean Jobs Bill*
 Illinois State Representative. Elaine Nekritz, sponsor of the Illinois Clean Jobs Bill,
 Jen Walling Illinois Environmental Council, **Illinois State Representative. Mike Fortner**, chief co-sponsor Illinois
 Clean Jobs Bill
12:30-1:30 p.m. Boxed Lunch
 Mark Walsh Campaign Director, Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence will be available to meet with League
 members interested in advocating for gun violence prevention
1:30 p.m. Plenary II: *The Outlook for Criminal Justice Reform in Illinois*
 Rodger Heaton, Chair, Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform
 John Maki, Executive Director, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Member of the Commission
3:00 p.m. Afternoon Workshops
 A. *Stand Up for Healthy Water – From Your Creek to the Gulf of Mexico*
 Bonnie Cox, Judy Beck, Henrietta Saunders, Krista Grimm, Sheri Latash
 B. *Effects of Mental Health Problems on Prisoners in Illinois*
 Jennifer Vollen-Katz, John Howard Association Executive Director
 C. *Consolidate, Eliminate or Continue to Fund - What to Do About Over 6900 Units of Government*
 Illinois State Senator Daniel Biss
 Dr. Darlene Ruscitti, Superintendent, DuPage Regional Office of Education; Member, Governor's Task Force
 for Streamlining Local Government
4:00 p.m. Drinks, Food, and Dialogue at nearby restaurants

Registration form is [online](#).

Or phone 312-939-5935 X 37 and ask Roberta Borrino to mail you the registration form.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

Friday, February 12, 2016, Registration after February 12 is \$65

Costs:

FULL DAY - \$60 per person (Early registration – Feb. 12 or before)

(includes boxed lunch, briefing packet, workshops & materials)

MORNING PROGRAM ONLY - \$35 per person

(includes boxed lunch, plenary, workshop & materials and briefing packet (\$25 without lunch)

AFTERNOON PROGRAM ONLY - \$35 per person

(includes boxed lunch, plenary, workshops & materials, briefing packet) (\$25 without lunch)