

Illinois League of Women Voters opposes local enforcement of immigration laws

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Illinois should provide driving certificates to undocumented immigrants and should not deputize local police to enforce immigration laws, according to a recent study on immigration by the League of Women Voters of Illinois.

The organization sent out surveys on immigration issues to the 47 local League of Women Voters in Illinois to reach a consensus on a number of immigration issues. All but 15 of the local Leagues responded. Members also interviewed police officials, school officials, social service providers and health providers over the past two years, said Jane Partridge of Lake Forest, who is the director of the League of Women Voters of Lake County.

"There was an overwhelming concern about the uneven treatment of immigrants -- both legal and illegal -- from one municipality to another, making it very difficult for legal and illegal immigrants to know what the law requires and sending illegal immigrants even further into the shadows," Partridge said.

Based on a consensus of at least 75 percent of members, the League opposes local police enforcing immigration laws in Illinois. Waukegan and Carpentersville have applied to participate in a federal program that would train officers to initiate deportation proceedings for legal and illegal aliens convicted of violent offenses.

"We're not saying that police shouldn't apprehend felons, but they should not take immigration into their own hands," Partridge said.

The Illinois League also opposes ordinance that would penalize landlords for renting to undocumented immigrants or would prohibit the issuance of business permits to undocumented immigrants. Carpentersville has considered similar proposals.

The League supports "driving certificates" for undocumented immigrants in Illinois that would allow those drivers to drive legally and ensure that they pass a state driving test.

During interviews with health providers and school officials the League found that schools and health providers in certain areas of the state were heavily burdened by immigration.

"What we need to do as an electorate is to force our representatives in Congress to come up with a comprehensive plan," Partridge said.

Delegates of the Illinois League met for a state convention in June and approved their position statement on immigration.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that works to improve government and impact public policies through citizen education and advocacy.