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**Does the Current State of Politics Get You Angry?
Don't Just Explode!
Join the League of Women Voters
and Do Something About It!!**

Join an organization that makes an impact in the community, the state and the nation.
Nonpartisan: We do not support candidates, elected officials or political parties.

Membership Information: call Myra Decker 643-2742 or send:

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone No. (home) _____ (work) _____ Email: _____

Membership Dues: _____ \$45.00 Individual

(Check desired level) _____ \$65.00 Family

Make check out to: **Plattsburgh Area League of Women Voters**

Mail to: Myra Decker, 7 Woodland Hills, Morrisonville, NY 12962

THE INFORMER



**League of Women Voters
of the Plattsburgh Area**

April 2007 No. 8

**238 Champlain Drive
Plattsburgh, New York 12901**

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Visit Plattsburgh LWV Web Site at www.plattsburgh.ny.lwvnet.org

Special

OFFER TO THE PUBLIC

If you wish to be put on the League's mailing list and receive the League Newsletter, "The Informer", to keep in touch about the League's activities, please submit \$5.00 to cover cost of postage and printing for 10 issues. Make check payable to **League of Women Voters, Plattsburgh Area** and send it to **Myra Decker, Treasurer, 7 Woodland Hill, Morrisonville, NY 12962.**

Plattsburgh Area League of Women Voters Annual Meeting

Ground Round Restaurant

April 26, 2007

5:30 p.m. Social Hour

6:00 p.m. Dinner

**7:00 p.m. Guest Speaker
Business Meeting***



Speaker: Janet Duprey, 114th Assembly District

Topic: "First Year Perspective on Albany"

Will Order from the Full Menu Guests are Welcome

R.S.V.P. to Myra Decker 643-2742 or Betsy Metz 561-6106 by April 24th

**Slate will be printed and mailed with the budget*



Hearts for LWVNY



The Stakes Are High. The Big League Raffle is back as part of Convention 2007, Reaching Out/ Reaching In. It is an opportunity to raise some funds for the state and local Leagues and for an individual to win some cash. This raffle is a partnership with local Leagues that provides all of the benefits to local Leagues of holding a raffle without the headaches. This is a win-win opportunity. Last year's raffle netted over \$17,000 with over \$6,487 given out in prizes, \$3,045 rebated to local Leagues, and an additional \$324 awarded to the League that sold the first prize ticket. Tickets are being printed and will be sent to local Leagues on April 1, 2007. Tickets and money must be returned to the state League by close of business, May 14, 2007

REMEMBER: Donations to the local League of Women Voters are **tax deductible** if the checks are made out to the **LWV Educational Fund.**

Greetings from Florida



Hi Everyone,

The environment is on everyone's minds in Lee County and the State of Florida. Red tide, algae, high levels of Phosphorus in the water, a potential cold burning incinerator are all concerns. The speakers at the March League meeting representing PURRE (People United to Restore our Rivers and Estuaries), spoke to these issues. Michael J. Valiquette began the program by showing visual examples of the scum foam and scum balls (size of tennis balls), blue green algae (one shot glass can kill a human), and red tide (3 feet thick on some of the beaches). The mouth of the Caloosahatchee River has high levels of red tide that is related to nutrients (fertilizers, phosphorus, nitrogen) from Lake Okeechobee. The filtration of the water coming into the Lake is affected by the canals and the straightening the snake like river that used to filter the water. The St. Lucie River on the east side of the Lake is toxic. During times of high water in Lake Okeechobee, water is released onto the farm lands north of the lake and into the Caloosahatchee River.

The number one problem is water quantity. Other issues are water quality, pulse release damage (estuaries can't handle the load that is put on it and the sea grass is affected); minimum/maximum flow levels (500-2800 cu ft.); "shared adversity" (distribute water with more equality).

Fifty percent of the problems are from golf courses, yard fertilizers, tarmac (drainage goes directly into catch basins which then flow directly into the Gulf of Mexico), septic systems, roads that are built without filtration under them.

Some of the solutions: The sugar industry doesn't re-cultivate the land so approximately 1/3 of the their land is dry and can't be used because they lack nutrients. This land could be used to store water. They are looking at a law to eliminate fertilizers with phosphorus. Sanibel has already passed an ordinance regarding fertilizers.

Mary Rawl, executive director of PURRE, talked about the water quality that has decreased 10-15% per year. The water quality is the worst in the State, new organisms are being seen and the Health Department indicated that this is an "act of God" and is unwilling to help.

The issues are: ••Storm water utility- need to ask for dedicated funding to filter marshes and treat septs (cost add to sewer bill); ••Total maximum daily load (TMDL) would be a "poison pill" to stop development; ••Landscaping and yard ordinances are being looked into; ••Sewage discharge - there are 8 plants. Some discharge raw sewage into the river during high water times; ••Water planning - none is done; waiting until 100% capacity of area; ••Funding for water quality competes with funding for schools etc. Lee County is not being proactive for funding; ••The Caloosahatchee River is #7 on the danger list in the U.S. for water quality.

Regional issues: ••Power Park Coal Fired Plant-mercury will go into the Okeechobee water shed and will have to be monitored; ••Heartland expressway- an east-west connector road. The concern is that agricultural land will be converted into developments.

State issues: ••Reclassify designated water levels. For example: "Splash water is ok, but not full body splash." Would like to see all water drinkable vs categories such as drinking, shellfish, fishing, etc. There are very few lobbyists for conservation; ••Water Resource Density Act would give the Army Corp of Engineers oversight of the water; ••Clean Water Act is up for reauthorization; seen as a major battle for clean water. Need to get businesses involved. Have to stop wasting fresh water. The average person uses 125 gallons/person/day water. Marco Island uses 425 gallons/person/day and is the highest in the country.

"We need to clean Lake Okeechobee first...We also need to reassess the Everglades Restoration Project because it is flawed." The League is having a Water Forum next month that will address these issues in more detail.

Still sunny and warm here. Hopefully spring is somewhere under all of that snow. Keep warm,
Stasia Arcarese



S. 436 - Reforming the Presidential Public Financing System



by Mary G. Wilson, President

The League of Women Voters urges you to cosponsor and support S. 436, the legislation designed to reinvigorate the public financing system for presidential elections. With prominent candidates from both parties opting out of public financing for 2008, this Congress has a special responsibility and a special opportunity to fix the system for the 2012 cycle.

Presidential candidates in the 2008 cycle will likely spend more than one billion dollars in funds raised from private sources. Instead of competing on a level playing field for the votes of their fellow citizens, candidates will necessarily seek competitive advantage in huge fundraising operations. To raise such large sums, candidates will expose themselves to the special interest influence that comes when lobbyists and other interested persons solicit, bundle and give to their campaigns.

In contrast, the public financing system provides for more equitable competition and helps insulate the candidates -- and our political and governmental systems -- from corruption and the appearance of corruption.

Presidential public financing needs to be updated in order to regain its vitality. S. 436, recently introduced by Senator Feingold (D WI), would accomplish this in several ways:

- * Eliminates the state-by-state spending limits and raises the overall limits for the primary and general elections;
- * Provides public funds to primary candidates earlier in the process;
- * Provides additional public funds if a privately-financed candidate significantly exceeds the spending limits applicable to the publicly-financed candidate;
- * Increases the public funds available by raising the check-off amount.

These and other provisions should make the system a viable option for serious candidates facing opponents who are capable of raising significant sums outside the system. The presidential public financing system worked well for decades. We urge you to support the changes that will enable that system once again to provide for equitable competition and to protect against undue influence.

CALL TO LWNYS CONVENTION 2007

“Reaching Out/Reaching In”
May 18th – 20th
Crowne Plaza, White Plains

In order to grow as an organization at all levels we constantly must seek new ideas, opportunities to reach new members and partner with other organizations that are not so much like us. We also must ask our members and friends what we can do better and what things need to be added (or discarded!).



League Has Moved

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Of New York State



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The Informer

League of Women Voters
of the Plattsburgh Area



April 2007

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League of Women Voter’s Friday Forum

April 6, 2007



12 Noon

Butcher Block Restaurant



Speaker: Inge Sapp

Topic: Adirondack Wildlife Animal Stories that have been broadcast on North County Public Radio

Soup and Salad: \$12.00

For Reservations, Call Carole Cao-Ba 563-3903 or TZIVIA12@aol.com by Wednesday, April 4th



2007 Calendar

April 6, 2007	First Friday Forum
April 26, 2007	Annual Meeting see p. 1 for details
May 4, 2007	First Friday Forum

New Resources Available on Judicial Independence: The following materials are available to Leagues interested in learning more about fair and independent courts: Gavel to Gavel, an online resource about trends in legislative activity regarding the courts nationwide; Arizona Shows The Way: Merit Selection Of Judges, showcased in the current National Voter; Countering the Critics, a Q&A guide in Support of Fair and Impartial Courts; and Protecting Our Rights, Protecting our Courts, an ABA DVD highlighting the relationship between state and federal courts.

Race to Execution Documentary Available

Race to Execution is a new documentary that explores the deep and disturbing link between race and the death penalty in America. Following the stories of two Death Row inmates - one in Chicago, Illinois and one in Russell County, Alabama - the film interweaves their compelling personal stories together with groundbreaking scholarship. Revealing how race infects our capital punishment system, Race to Execution invites dialogue in the larger community about this systemic crisis within our justice system. The film will be broadcast nationally on PBS' Independent Lens on March 27, so check the online schedule for times and additional dates. For more information on the film, go to: <http://www.racetoeexecution.com/>.



Thank you! NEW YORK STATE

Thank you for your untiring contributions for the League! The League of Women Voters marked March 8, 2007, International Women's Day, by celebrating the contributions of women in strengthening democracy worldwide and highlighting the incredible work women are doing to improve their communities in the United States. Keep the celebration going! Join men and women who are coming "together" for strength, inspiration and fun! See you in White Plains, May 18-20 for our 52nd State Convention! Marcia A. Merrins LWVNYS, President

Exciting Immigration Panel Planned for Council 2007

This June, Council delegates will be treated to an exciting panel - "Immigration Policy in the 21st Century." Confirmed panel participants include: Doris Meisner, Senior Fellow, Migration Policy Institute, and Donald Kerwin, Executive Director, Catholic Legal Immigration Network. The panel will be held Monday morning, June 11. Go to lwv.org for more information on Council 2007 .

League Urges Budget Funding for State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

The League this week joined a vast coalition of organizations urging members of Congress to fully fund the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

DC Voting Rights Education Project: "Un-Natural State" Documentary Available.

The DC Voting Rights Education Project's newest video addition "Un-Natural State" is now available online! This documentary looks at the denial of democracy in our nation's capital and how DC citizens are directly affected by this injustice. This video can be downloaded and distributed to schools, universities or media in your area to help educate your community about DC citizens' lack of voting rights.

LWV to Host "Women in the Americas: Paths to Political Power" Event.

On March 28, the League will cosponsor an event aimed at bringing together distinguished women leaders from Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States to discuss the dramatic advances achieved by women seeking public office in the past ten years and the special challenges currently facing women in electoral politics. Other sponsors include PROLEAD of the Inter-American Development Bank, the Inter-American Dialogue, and the Organization of American States Summits of the Americas Secretariat.

Finishing Your Taxes? Check off the Box for Presidential Public Financing.

As you prepare your federal taxes in the coming weeks, be sure to support the League's mission by checking the box in support of Presidential public financing. Please encourage your members to do the same!

Celebrate Women's History Month by Sharing the Gift of League Membership

March is Women's History Month. What better way to celebrate than to invite a friend or neighbor to become a member of the League? Remind people that the League notes the achievements of women in the past and highlights the successes of today's women, making a difference in communities coast to coast. Invite someone you know to become a member of the League of Women Voters and join us in doing the hands-on work to safeguard democracy.

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) Report Available

On February 8th, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) Summit participants unveiled an important report about the 2006 election experience of overseas and U.S. military voters. This survey was conducted by our partner the Overseas Vote Foundation and included responses from over 4,500 U.S. military and overseas voters. Survey respondents reported that UOCAVA voters still face major difficulties in successfully voting absentee because of late ballots or ballots not arriving at all, missed registration deadlines, inability to get ballots witnessed or notarized, and confusing residency validation requirements. This comprehensive report analyzes this important information and proposes recommendations to better service this community.

Connect Citizens and Government "Opportunity for Leagues"

The Association of Government Accountants (AGA) has launched a new pilot project, the Citizen-Centric Government Reporting Initiative. This initiative encourages governments to produce and publish an annual "state of the government" report. The reports are designed to provide citizens with basic information about the financial condition and performance of their local government. AGA believes that the report will make governments more accountable to their citizens and will help Americans become more educated citizens. AGA is working with various civic groups as well as its own chapters to promote this project among local government officials. To find out more, see a sample report, and/or promote this initiative locally, please visit <http://www.agacgfm.org/citizen/> or contact Susan Fritzlen or call 1.800.242.7211.



LWVEF to be Goodsearch Charity of the Day, March 29

GoodSearch.com is a new search engine that donates half its revenue to the charities its users designate. On March 29, the League of Women Voters Education Fund will be the featured charity of the day! Just go to www.goodsearch.com, enter LWVEF as the charity you want to support, and start searching!

Leagues Host Sunshine Week Events, Conduct Information Audits.

During sunshine week, the League cosponsored a national kickoff event, "Closed Doors; Open Democracies", to promote openness in communities nationwide. The successful event was webcast live throughout the country. Visit our openness in government page to read more about our Sunshine Week 2007 activities. In January, eight Leagues joined reporters, students and volunteers to participate in a nationwide information audit to gauge local responsiveness to freedom of information requests as mandated by law. Collecting data from over 400 communities, the audit found nearly half of official gatekeepers willing "if wary" to provide copies of emergency response plans, which federal law makes public. For more information lwv.org.

SHAPE ISSUES YOU CARE ABOUT

Become an E-Activist on the League's Legislative Priorities. League members are hard at work in communities around the country, helping shape public policy and advocating for meaningful reform. From supporting election, ethics and lobbying reform to combatting global warming, the League is changing the system for the better. Get involved here at lwv.org (Feb. leaguEvoice)

URGENT

Tell The Governor by fax or email: "NY Voters Deserve the Best"

Action
Alert!

New York State is about to undergo an enormous change in the way our elections are conducted. Soon all our lever machines will be replaced with a new way to cast our ballots. It is crucial that the State get the choice of voting systems right the first time. Adopting flawed electronic touch screen voting machines (DREs) would be a mistake we cannot afford to make, and there's a better choice: paper ballots counted with ballot-scanners, with accessible ballot-marking devices to make sure everyone can vote independently and privately. The current plan allows each New York State county to choose its own voting system. This will lead to a disastrous patchwork of expensive touch screen DREs administered by under-trained staff and elderly poll workers. We'll see long lines at the polls, frustrated voters, questionable results and subsequent legal challenges -- and confusion resulting from a mix of different systems around the state. Don't let this happen in New York State! Tell him there is only one choice for New York - a single statewide voting system using paper ballots, precinct based optical scanners, and accessible ballot marking devices.! See **fax/email addresses on last page of the newsletter.** (local league presidents March 3, 2007)



ACT NOW! for the Bigger, Better, Bottle Bill!



The BBBB will keep our communities clean by discouraging litter with economic incentives. We need to let the Senate know that we support our environment! Contact Your Senator Regarding the "**Bigger Better Bottle Bill.**" Take Action! Let Them Know That This is the Year to Accomplish This Necessary Environmental Reform. Governor Spitzer has included the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill (BBBB) in his 2007-2008 budget bill. The League of Women Voters of New York State has supported this legislation for several years, however, the bill has never passed in the State Senate. The time for action is now!

LWVNY Appeal for 501(c)4 Funds

The LWVNY appeal for 501(c)4 funds reached members the week of February 14. Valentine's Day is the anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters. If you have not, please consider a gift as part of this appeal. A majority of the peripheral costs of the very effective advocacy work being done in Albany is financed with funds raised as part of the League annual appeal. The hard work of the last decade is showing signs of coming to fruition through various measures being proposed and implemented in Albany. We need to keep up the pressure in on our elected officials. This requires funds to support infrastructure and administrative support. Thank you for helping us keep the momentum going!

Women's History Month

In celebration of Women's History Month, the League of Women Voters notes the achievements of women in the past and highlights the successes of today's women, making a difference from coast to coast. From the suffragists who founded our organization 87 years ago to strong women who volunteer time to improve their communities today, women of the League are making a profound civic impact.

In nearly every community in America, outstanding women and men are volunteering their time and energy to the League. They are rolling up their sleeves to connect with voters, encourage good public policy change, and provide useful resources to citizens. At the federal level and in nations throughout the world, the League is utilizing this energy to advocate for sound policies that will positively impact all people.

The Changing Faces of Power

During this time of unprecedented gains by women in politics, the League of Women Voters and the Sewall-Belmont House & Museum are joining forces in 2007-08, to present The Changing Faces of Power. This three-part series will explore the hard-fought journey of women through America's political system. Forum speakers will give an insider's perspective on the lasting impact of women as voters candidates, and elected officials holding positions of power. Learn more about the changing faces of power at: AM/TemplateRedirect.cfm?template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=7902>

Women in History



Mary (Rice) Livermore (1820-1905)-First woman news reporter at a political convention (1860); first president of the Association for the Advancement of Women (1873). Livermore graduated from a female seminary in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1836. After teaching languages for two years, she tutored in the South for three years, returning to Massachusetts to head a co-educational school in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

In 1945 she married a minister, and while raising a family she continued to work as a writer and editor. She was the associate editor of the *New Covenant*, a Universalist monthly that her husband had purchased in 1858 and edited until 1869.

In 1860 she was a reporter at the Republican National Convention in Chicago, Illinois. that nominated Abraham Lincoln.

During the Civil war, Livermore went to work for the Chicago Sanitary Commission, and in 1862 she and her friend, Jane Hoge, were named heads of the commission. Their responsibilities included fund-raising, supply allocation, and oversight of military hospitals.

She convened the first women's suffrage convention in Illinois in 1868, and in 1870 became the editor of *Woman's Journal*, the official publication of the American Woman Suffrage Association. She resigned as editor in 1872, at which time Lucy Stone and her husband became editors. Livermore served the AWSA as president from 1875 to 1878. She also became a well-known temperance speaker (from *The Book of Women's Firsts* by Phyllis J. Read and Bernard L. Witlieb. p. 256.)

Sixth Immigration Study Background Paper Available

The sixth Immigration Study Background Paper, “Federal Immigration Policy: Enforcement Issues,” is now available online at lwv.org. Thank you for your continued interest in the Immigration Study!

League Urges Passage of OPEN Government Act

The LWVUS this week sent a letter to key Senate leaders, urging the passage of the OPEN Government Act of 2007. The legislation will expand the accessibility and accountability of the federal government by strengthening the Freedom of Information Act and making information more readily available to the public.

League Praises Introduction of Public Financing Legislation

League President Mary G. Wilson this week applauded the introduction of important bipartisan public financing legislation in the Senate by Senators Durbin (D IL) and Specter (R PA). The legislation would improve the federal election process by allowing qualified candidates to receive campaign funds from the Senate Fair Elections Fund instead of relying upon money from private interests.

DC Voting Rights Education Project: Listen to Podcast Interview

A DC Voting Rights Education Project local League participant, LWV of Seattle, recently interviewed LWVDC member and DC voting rights activist, Kathryn Ray, as part of their project. A podcast of the interview is now available online! It can be downloaded and distributed to schools, universities or media in your area to help educate your community about DC citizens’ lack of voting rights. Contact Robyn Kurland for information on receiving a \$1,000 grant to participate in this public education and outreach project, or go to lwv.org to read about the fantastic work our Leagues are doing.



Don’t forget the First Friday Forum on **May 4th**. Check the local newspaper and League website for more information.

Passover-April



Easter-April 8



Earth Day-April 22



Office of Public Integrity Needed to Enforce House Ethics Rules

Our organizations (Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.) believe it is essential to establish a professional, nonpartisan enforcement entity to help enforce the House ethics rules. We believe that such an ethics enforcement entity is the lynchpin for all other ethics reforms adopted in this Congress. The following is a summary of the elements that our organizations believe are essential to establishing an effective and publicly credible new ethics enforcement entity

Establishing an Office of Public Integrity to Help Enforce the House Ethics Rules

It is essential to establish a nonpartisan, professional enforcement entity with real authority to help enforce the House ethics rules. This reform is the lynchpin for all other ethics reforms. An Office of Public Integrity should be created with the following essential elements:

- The Office of Public Integrity should have the authority to receive and investigate outside complaints and to initiate and conduct investigations on its own authority, where the Office determines that a matter requires investigation.
- The Office should have the powers necessary to conduct investigations, including the authority to administer oaths, and to issue and enforce subpoenas. The subject of any investigation should have the opportunity to present information to the Office to show that no violation has occurred. The Office should have the authority to dismiss frivolous complaints expeditiously and to impose sanctions for filing such complaints.
- The Office of Public Integrity should be headed by a Director or by a three-member panel, should have a professional, impartial staff and should have the resources necessary to carry out the Office’s responsibilities.

If the Office is headed by a Director, the Director should be chosen jointly by the Speaker and Minority Leader. If the Office is headed by a panel, the panel should consist of three members, with one member chosen by the Speaker, one member chosen by the Minority Leader and the third member chosen by the other two members.

- The Office’s Director or panel members should be individuals of distinction with experience as judges, ethics officials or in law enforcement, should not be Members or former Members, should have term appointments and should be subject to removal only for cause by joint agreement of the Speaker and Minority Leader.
- The Office should have the authority to present a case to the House Ethics Committee for its decision, based on the same standard that is currently used to determine when a case should be presented to the Committee. The Ethics Committee would be responsible for determining if ethics rules have been violated and what, if any, sanctions should be imposed or recommended to the House. A public report should be issued on the disposition of a case by the Ethics Committee. The Office should have the authority to recommend sanctions to the Committee, if the Committee determines an ethics violation had occurred.
- The Office should receive, monitor and oversee financial disclosure, travel and other reports filed by Members and staff, to ensure that reports are properly filed and to make the reports public in a timely and easily accessible manner. The Office should have the same authority for lobbying reports filed under the Lobbying Disclosure Act.

This list of essential elements for an Office of Public Integrity is supported by the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG. (Letter sent to Representative Michael Capuano, Washington DC)