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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**

March 2007 No. 7

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

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Visit Plattsburgh LWV Web Site at [www.plattsburgh.ny.lwvnet.org](http://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.**



Invigorating,  
Stimulating,  
Fun

Board positions for 2007-8: Betsy Metz is "retiring" as President. Myra Decker has volunteered to serve as President. We have openings for the offices of co-President, Treasurer, and general board. Please contact nominating committee **Cesca Hartnett or Betsy Metz 561-6106 if you are interested.**

LWV celebrated its  
87th birthday  
on February 14th.



### California to Decrease Urban Tumbleweed

Urban tumbleweed. Bag hawks. Shoppers' kites. Whatever you call them, plastic grocery bags are discarded by the billions each year in the United States and end up floating in waterways, dangling from trees and crowding landfills. California state assemblyman Lloyd Levine introduced a bill—recently signed into law—that requires supermarkets and large stores to implement an in-store plastic bag "take-back" and recycling program. In June 2007 California stores will only be permitted to distribute plastic bags imprinted with instructions to return them to participating stores. The stores then will send them off to recycling centers. Plastic bags can be used to make new bags as well as traffic cones and patio furniture, according to reusablebags.com. Stores also will be required to fund campaigns educating consumers about how to recycle bags (i.e., via store, not curbside, programs) and to offer sturdy reusable bags for sale.

Levine discovered that Californians use 19 billion bags a year, creating 147,038 tons of trash and killing thousands of marine animals who ingest the bags or become entangled in them. Global production of these bags is estimated at about 1 trillion annually, consuming 12 million barrels of oil.

As for that perennial check-out question, "Paper or plastic?", according to reusablebags.com the pros and cons are roughly equal. Visit the website to learn about recent legislation (or to shop for products that help cut bag consumption).—Marialisa Calta Eating Well Magazine Jan/Feb 2007

### CHEERS for the League of Women Voters



To area grocers P&C, Grand Union in Peru, Hannaford, Price Chopper and Wal-Mart for undertaking recycling of their plastic bags. Hannaford had been doing it for years, without any prodding; Price Chopper used to, stopped, and restarted after being asked. The asking came from the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, which has been promoting the value of the effort. How much better it is to recycle and reuse these bags than to toss them into the landfill to take up space for eons. And, while we're at it, CHEERS also to **Myra Decker**, who was the head asker on behalf of the League, who wouldn't take no for an answer. (Press Republican Jan. 22, 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,

Karen Hawes, Director of the Lee County Department of Human Services, spoke about the various programs that the County provides at the Lee County League membership meeting. She said that she has worked in government for 22 years and loves it. Every day is a challenge. What frustrates her is someone who complains and then she finds out that that individual didn't vote.

She began by describing the budget and stating that 83% of the budget are mandated expenditures that she can't control. Social services are provided through effective grant management through partnerships with community based agencies and compliance with the regulations of Federal (HUD, Homeless Continuum of Care, for ex.), State (Dept. of Children and Families (DCF)), Dept. of Motor Vehicles (Choose Life license plates-fees used for material needs of pregnant women who choose adoption and program advertising expenses) and local funding sources. She then described the various programs.

Family Self-Sufficiency delivers programs to assist households to achieve or maintain self-sufficiency and housing. Services focus on stabilizing or helping low income people increase their economic independence. While most households in crisis come for financial assistance, they may receive intensive case management and referrals to other partner agencies for services. The families have to show that they can manage after one month. 44% of the population are uninsured.

FSS Emergency Services Programs assist households that are facing a temporary financial crisis due to an unforeseen loss of income or an unexpected expense that doesn't allow the household budget to meet their housing or utility needs. One month of assistance can be provided for mortgage, rent and utility expenses.

The Department's homeless programs provide comprehensive services and financial assistance that focus on stabilizing homeless families and individuals into permanent housing. In 2006 there were 2200 homeless individuals.

Housing Opportunities for Person with AIDS (HOPWA) is a federally funded housing program that contracts with the Lee County Dept. of Human Services to assist persons with AIDS or are HIV positive, who are experiencing a financial crisis due to their medical condition. The goal is to retain stable housing so they can continue to be more active in the community, maintain a medication schedule and be self-sufficient. Florida is in the top 8 states with the number of AIDS individuals.

The Neighborhood Building Program prepares planning documents, grant proposals, and reports necessary to secure and maintain funding for a variety of public service and infrastructure projects. Special emphasis has been given to address homelessness, at risk youth, and communities that are special risk due to poverty, crime, and substandard living conditions. This has resulted in a decrease in crime in the neighborhoods.

There is also a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that identifies where services are needed (e.g. maps juvenile offender resident locations and other demographics, disaster assessment data mapping tool)

Neighborhood Accountability Board's aim is to repair harm brought on by crime by incorporating Restorative Justice principles. Youth referred have been charged with non-violent offenses or other misdemeanors under the age of 18, who typically do not have any previous charges. Their participation is strictly voluntary. Repair examples: community service, letters of apology, monetary reimbursement, curfew, enroll in an after-school program. 147 youth completed the program, approx. 866 hours of community service were given back to the community, and only 4 youth re-offended.

The Human Services Council completed a Lee County Strategic Plan in 2005 that provides recommendations for Health, Children's Services, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Homeless, Juvenile Justice, and Senior Services.

The Housing Services Program utilizes Federal and State funds to assist income eligible residents to become homeowners. (down payment assistance; rehabilitate houses, hurricane repairs or replacements and demolish unsafe structures were activities in 2006).

As you can see, a lot of services are available for Lee County residents.

The League's book club met and had a lively discussion on "The Myths of Free Trade" by Sherrod Brown. In essence, the Free Trade promises of increasing the economic and social level of developing countries have not been fulfilled. The next book is "State of Denial" by Bob Woodward that describes the behind the scenes after the Iraq Invasion. If only we had hindsight as foresight.

Keep warm.

Stasia

continued from p.8 "UN Update"

Many health issues continued to be on the forefront of the UN agenda. This included HIV/Aids, its spread and the lack of treatment for 1 in 5 infected people; the threat of avian flu, which could become a worldwide pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis and many other diseases. More than one million people still do not have access to clean drinking water, which leads to many water borne diseases.

On the bright side, UNICEF and other UN Agencies continued with its successful vaccination programmes against many childhood diseases. In a partnership between UNICEF, WHO and several other organizations including the US Center for Disease Control, vaccinations have cut measles deaths in half in the last few years worldwide and by 75% in Africa. Polio has also been almost eliminated from the world due to vaccinations. A Global Fund rallied help and funding for AIDS tuberculosis and malaria.

A climate change conference held by the UN in November tried to focus the attention of world leaders on the need to act to prevent any more danger to the climate.

The 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women had two themes: Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work and Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels. The 51st session will be held from February 26 through March 9 2007, but preparations have been ongoing in 2006. It will have as its theme the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

On 27 January 2006, over 2,000 people gathered in the General Assembly Hall at United Nations Headquarters for the first ever observance of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

This report must include mention of the amount of US arrears to the UN, which is estimated, at the end of 2006, for peacekeeping and regular budget, to be over \$800 million. This does not include arrears to UN Agencies.

Finally we need to remember the need of all humanity for a successful United Nations and to ensure that a greater understanding of the work of the UN is shared not only with LWV members, but that all LWVs make an effort to share the good work of the UN within our communities.

UN website <http://www.un.org/english/> UNICEF website <http://www.unicef.org> UN image and Reality <http://www.un.org/geninfo/ir/index.asp?id=190> UNA-USA website <http://www.unausa.org/>

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## League of Women Voter's Friday Forum

**March 2, 2007**



12 Noon

Butcher Block Restaurant



**Speaker: TBA**

Soup and Salad: \$12.00

For Reservations, Call **Carole Cao-Ba 563-3903** or **Betsy Metz 561-6106** by **Wednesday, Feb. 28th.**



**2007 Calendar**



March 2, 2007	First Friday Forum
April 6, 2007	First Friday Forum

### CALL TO LWVNYS 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

League Of Women Voters  
Of New York State



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## February Friday Forum Report

by Betsy Metz



At the February Friday Forum, Kelly King, Director of the City of Plattsburgh Recreation Department, spoke about "Recreation Plattsburgh Style". Plattsburgh reflects the changing dynamics of recreation. Historically, in the recreation heyday of the 1960's - 80's youth played freely. Children would drop in to city parks for play any time of the day. Activities were a continuation of games and crafts also played at home. Organized sports were typically "lifelong" sports, such as tennis, swimming and cross-country skiing. Parents were comfortable in dropping children off for the day at the beach. Recreation departments generally received 100% funding from the community. Today two major factors have changed the dynamics of Recreation Departments: fear and trickle down economics. Parents want to know what their children are doing at all times

so play has become very structured - no longer drop in. The rising cost of community operations have caused funding cutbacks. Recreation departments are now competing for monies and participants. The quality of life programs sponsored by recreation departments are deemed less important as cities struggle to provide the essential services of fire, police, utilities and sanitation. However, people need the physical and emotional benefits of recreational activities. City facilities are also key elements in promoting the City to potential businesses and residents. Sports marketing, Kelly's college major, is an important component in running a viable program. One must be able to sell the values of recreation to access funding and to provide youth an appealing alternative to computer games and other entertainment. Advocacy is needed and is critically important now. Demographics are changing with the increase in the aging, active population. Kelly said there is strong interest in extra programs, such as painting and yoga. The Rec. Department would like to accommodate this interest. The City needs to know that spending for the Rec. Department programs is justified. Kelly feels the severe City budget cutbacks in the Rec. Department have been proportional to many other departments. He is concerned about the impact of funding constraints on any facility maintenance needed in the future. The Consumer Price Index is currently 2-3%/year. Thus 0 tax increase is in reality a loss. The Rec. Department currently offers indoor and outdoor soccer, ice skating, softball, baseball, a kayak clinic, sailing, an introduction to sports (soccer, baseball and running) and February break Kids' Camp for 1st-5th graders. Facilities are widely used at Bailey, Sandra and Flynn Avenue parks, the City Beach and Crete Center, Base Fitness Center and Old Base Oval. Reciprocity agreements include the Stafford Middle School swimming pool and gym for summer programs. A teen center is currently under study by the City Task Force. Note: the indoor track at the Base Fitness Center is free for people 55 years and older. The department is run by 4 full time staffers. As the budget permits, 10-20 part-time staff are hired for seasonal programs. 99% are city residents. Volunteers, primarily from R.S.V.P., are pivotal in assisting with special events such as the Mayor's Cup. For more information visit [www.cityofplattsburgh.com](http://www.cityofplattsburgh.com) and [www.cretesports.com](http://www.cretesports.com).

**Reforming the Presidential Public Financing System: 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. (Leader's Update 2/15/07)

## LWVNYS Legislative Agenda for 2007



1. Reforming State Government:
  - \* Ethics \* Campaign Finance
  - \* Redistricting
  - \* Lobbying
  - \* Budget
  - \* Public Authorities
  - \* Legislative Procedure
2. Equity in School Financing
3. Cost Effective & Accessible Health Care
4. Court Restructuring/Judicial Selection Additional League Positions:
  - \* Capital Punishment - the League supports abolition of the death penalty, with the use of life without parole as the primary alternative.
  - \* Elections - supports a single statewide voting system using paper ballot/optical scan. We support legislation to ensure the integrity of the election process and all ballots. The League also supports increased state funding for poll worker and voter education.
  - \* Reproductive Rights - supports a woman's constitutional right of privacy in making reproductive choices.
  - \* Salary Equity Reform - supports legislation to enable private sector employees to obtain and reveal private sector salaries without reprisal. Secret salaries in the private sector keep employees from knowing if they are equally paid and can often mean job termination for seeking this information. In the public sector, we support legislation requiring the use of gender-neutral job evaluation systems to end underpayment of job titles in which women and minorities predominate.
  - \* Smart Growth/Containing Sprawl - supports a proactive role for the state in conserving natural resources and containing sprawl. We support legislation that will promote regional land use planning, enhance urban neighborhoods, and protect agricultural land, open space, watersheds and other sensitive areas.

continued from p. 7 "UN Update"

The problem of child soldiers was another ongoing issue on the UN agenda. In March, the International Criminal Court indicted Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, because of his widespread use of child soldiers. In July, the Security Council renewed its commitment to protecting children in armed conflict. More attention is focused on it because of the Secretary-General's report in October on children and armed conflict.

A High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) was held in the General Assembly in September 2006.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the European Commission and the Government of Belgium convened the "International Symposium on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond" in June. The gathering reflected what UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called "a growing international consensus that sexual violence is a human rights violation, a global public health problem and an impediment to recovery, development and peace." Representatives from war-torn countries presented action plans for ending or preventing sexual violence and sought help with these issues. In the Brussels Call to Action produced by the symposium, which included 21 items the following was stated "Finally, we cannot expect to end the violence that women and girls suffer during conflict if we fail to address their unequal status at all times. This violence does not arise only out of the conditions of war; it is also directly related to the inequality and injustice women suffer during peacetime."

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**LWV Summary of H.R. 811, the Voter-Verified Paper Ballot "Holt Bill"** - This bill, which was introduced in the House on February 5, 2007, differs somewhat from the Holt Bill previously introduced in the last session of Congress. For that reason, as we always do at all levels of the League, I wanted to make sure that we understood the provisions of the 44-page bill before I spoke about it. You may read the entire text of H.R. 811 on the House website. We have also prepared a "plain English" summary of the bill and posted it on the LWVUS website here.

In brief, the bill would require that all voting systems provide an individual voter-verified paper ballot for inspection and verification by the voter before the vote is cast and counted and that said permanent paper ballot is the "true and correct" record of the vote for recount and audit purposes, and authorizes \$300 million for payments to states to meet the bill's new requirements for voting systems. The bill also contains exhaustive procedures for mandatory hand count audits, a process to be administered by new audit boards in each state who are independent of the state elections officials...Leagues may confirm with their local Representatives that the League supports the bill's requirement that voting systems provide a voter-verified paper ballot and that said ballot should be the official ballot used for recount or audit purposes. The requirement that a mandatory random audit of some kind be conducted is essential to restoring the voters' confidence in the vote count.

With respect to the part of the Holt Bill which establishes a requirement for a mandatory audit, the LWVUS has never conducted a study of such details as to what percentage of votes would constitute a statistically appropriate random audit or whether such audits should be conducted by a state entity that has no prior expertise in vote counting. We also have no knowledge of the ability of states to comply with this requirement by the 2008 election. Therefore, at the present time, if Leagues would like to address the issue of mandatory audits with their local Representative, please feel free to state that the League supports routine audits of paper ballots in randomly selected precincts in every election, and believes that the results should be published by the jurisdiction. Please do not indicate, however, that we have a position at this time on the specific provisions of the Holt Bill related to mandatory audits. (MWilson@lww.org./Leader's Update 2/15)

**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.racetoexecution.com/>.

continued from p. 6 "UN Update"

Rwanda, with the help of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has trained 250,000 village judges to locally try 800,000 murder suspects from the years of conflict. Those convicted will have to do community service, rebuilding the country. In addition, the criminal tribunal for Rwanda has 43 generals and politicians on trial for crimes against humanity and genocide.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was faced with the growing threat in Iran, and the imposition of sanctions against the country towards the end of the year, because of its uranium enrichment programme. The Security Council, which imposed the sanctions, asked Mr. El Baradei to report within 60 days to the Council on whether Iran has suspended enrichment activities. If it has not, further action will be taken. The IAEA is also involved in The Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT), which uses radiation medicine in developing countries, to treat cancer. It has donated some of its Nobel Peace Prize money to the effort. (The IAEA won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.)

continued on p. 8

by Betsy Metz

At the February membership meeting, Kathie Wunderlich discussed "Emergency Contraception: A Case Study of Barriers to Access to Reproductive Health Care." She addressed reproductive health care access and parallels in general healthcare as it is parceled out in the US. Healthcare policy is shaped by politics and funding. Efforts to improve healthcare often increase barriers. The country's view of healthcare is a huge factor in choices for treatment. Americans view it as a right rather than a privilege. Money and religion and money and politics are powerful influences. A great deal of money is spent by not covering the uninsured who are a high risk, costly population base - predominantly people of color, women and minorities. These people typically do not receive routine "well checks" and delay seeking medical care until the condition is more advanced, hence more traumatic for the patient and most costly to treat. The following statistics describe the situation:

- \* 16.9 million people below the age of 65 were not insured.
- \* The highest percentage of uninsured is the 18-24 year old group.
- \* 4 in 10 children are born to unwed women - a major cultural shift.
- \* Pregnancies to uninsured, poor women have increased by 94%.
- \* Franklin County and the Bronx are the highest areas in New York state.
- \* 50% of the pregnancies nationally are unintended; 58% in NY.
- \* Barriers to healthcare in rural areas include insufficient transportation and childcare.
- \* There is a greater emphasis on care in highly populated areas.
- \* Education/"getting the word out" is an on-going challenge, ex. Child Health Plus, an important benefit program for the uninsured.



Kathie Wunderlich

Great fragmentation in health education exists. There is no mandate for age. \$176 million was spent for abstinence education and none for age appropriate, medically accurate sex education. AIDS testing is mandated, but cannot teach the sex education component. In the North Country sex education was better 15 years ago. Public pressure has led to a reduction. Contraception has evolved significantly. The birth control pill is one of the top ten achievements to benefit mankind. Women have power over their bodies with birth control. However, bureaucracy raises major barriers. For example, in applying for Medicaid a birth certificate is the only valid I.D. In rare instances alternatives are accepted on a case by case basis. The same requirement is true for mental health care. Medicaid funding is available for abortions, but funds for EC have been frozen since 1992. 87% of the counties in New York state have no abortion services. Emergency contraception is an extremely important program, both for quality of life and in the significant reduction of healthcare costs. Again major barriers exist. The administration blocked F.D.A. approval of this totally safe, well-established medication. Reactionary groups say that preventing fertilization is an abortion. Science says life begins with implantation. EC is often confused with RU 486. EC is very effective when used correctly - education continues to be vital. Religious groups create a barrier in access to contraception, sex education and reproductive healthcare, such as tubal ligation. 10 of 20 hospitals in New York are Catholic. The merger trend between Catholic and non-Catholic hospitals continues. Catholic hospitals receive large amounts of state funding, but the state does not require compliance.

"This is not just about family planning or contraception...it is about the kind of country we believe in, what kind of obligation we owe one another. We have a very high value placed on individual choice and individual responsibility. But we don't often empower people to be able to make those choices in a responsible way." Quoted from Hillary Clinton's comments in 2006. Guttmacher Policy Review, summer 2006, vol. 9, no. 3 by Rachel Benson Gold.

**DC Voting Rights Act** was ready to go to the floor late last year, but the leadership at that time decided not to proceed. With new leadership which is more attuned to voting rights issues, we have an historic opportunity to take another step in the long struggle for full voting rights for every citizen in our nation. Keep the momentum going! Please **contact your Representative now** and urge her or him to **support** quick enactment of **H.R. 328, the DC Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act of 2007** by phone and by email, and urge her/him to support quick enactment of the bipartisan bill to provide representation in the U.S. House of Representatives to the citizens of the District of Columbia. Tell your Representative to cosponsor and vote for H.R. 328, the Norton-Davis bill, to provide for DC voting rights. Phone calls are helpful and can be made through the Capitol Hill switchboard at 202-224-3121 or 202-225-3121.



Citizens of the District of Columbia pay U.S. taxes, fight and die for the U.S. during wartime, and are governed by the laws that Congress passes. And yet they have no voting representation in Congress. They have only a non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives. The “DC Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act”, sponsored by Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D DC) and Representative Tom Davis (R VA), would right this wrong. The legislation provides voting representation in the House for DC citizens by increasing the size of the House by two seats; one for DC and the other for the state of Utah, which is entitled to the next seat by size of population. This balanced approach provides voting rights for District citizens without upsetting the partisan balance of the House. Americans living in the nation’s capital deserve to have voting representation in the body that makes their laws, taxes them and can call them to war. Only Congress can ensure that the democracy Americans have espoused and fought for across the globe becomes a reality in the nation’s capital.

**UN Commission on the Status Women (CSW)**

The theme of the fifty-first meeting of the CSW is “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” and will be held February 26, 2007 - March 9, 2007. The UN Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW) has selected Working Group on Girls (WGG) of the NGO Committee on UNICEF to be one of the two leading NGO committees for the Commission meeting. The Division on the Advancement of Women website refers to our WGG website. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw51/NGO.html#girl>. Look at paragraph 5.

**Sunshine Week is Fast Approaching (March 11 -13, 2007)** This will be the third year with national recognition of the importance of transparency and freedom of information in government. Sunshine Week seeks to enlighten and empower citizens to play an active role in their government at all levels, and to give them access to information that makes their lives better and their communities stronger. Journalists around the county are being encouraged to report on this topic during that week. The LWVEF’s 2006 “Looking for Sunshine” toolkit can be ordered through LWVUS publications, publication number 2077. The “Are You Safer in the Dark?” DVD from last year’s national event can be ordered here . Other materials can be downloaded from the Sunshine Week Web site at [www.sunshineweek.org](http://www.sunshineweek.org) or by contacting Theresa Cummings . LWVUS is partnering with other organizations in a kick-off event for Sunshine Week on **March 12th** at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. The program, entitled “**Closed Doors; Open Democracies**”?, will include a panel discussion, audience questions, and ideas for action, and **will be webcast to sites around the country**. The purpose is to share this discussion of national experts with local communities, providing them with material to educate the public on this important issue.

The LWVNYS’s website <http://www.lwvny.org/> has been revamped. It is more user friendly and professional looking. All of our information is still there. Please take a few minutes to poke around with your mouse.



**United Nations Wrap-Up 2006**

Doris Schapira, LWVUS UN

“I remain convinced that the only answer to this divided world must be a truly United Nations. Climate change, HIV/AIDS, fair trade, migration, human rights-all these issues and many more bring us back to that point. Addressing each is indispensable for each of us in our village, in our neighbourhood and in our country. Yet, each has acquired a global dimension that can only be reached by global action, agreed and coordinated through this most universal of institutions.” (Excerpt from Secretary-General Annan’s address at the opening of the General Assembly debate on 19 September 2006.)

The UN has once again had a very full agenda of problems to deal with and work to accomplish. It would be impossible to even list all the efforts and great good accomplished by the UN in two pages, so please understand the selective nature of this report.

In June, Montenegro became the 192nd member of the UN; a vast increase over the original 51 members.

The first woman to ever serve as President of the General Assembly, H. E. Ambassador Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, was elected President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. She succeeded H. E. Ambassador Jan Eliasson of Sweden, who served from September 2005 through September 2006. Ambassador Eliasson was very open to NGOs and held several meetings for NGO input. He also appointed the first NGO liaison with the General Assembly, Shamina de Gonzaga, as Special Advisor on NGO Relations.

On October 13, Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea was appointed Secretary-General, to succeed Kofi Annan on January 1, 2007. According to tradition, the next Secretary-General was to be from a country in Asia. Secretary-General Kofi Annan served as Secretary-General for 10 years with style, grace and great ability. His departure is a loss to the international community. This was reflected in the “prolonged standing ovation” H. E. Kofi Annan received at the December 14 swearing in ceremony for the new Secretary-General, which included many tributes to the outgoing Secretary-General.

A Human Rights Council to replace the Human Rights Commission was established, with different rules aimed at preventing the politicization and problems that plagued the Commission. It has had mixed results.

In addition to ongoing conflicts, the UN had to deal with new or escalating situations in Lebanon and Darfur as well as in Iraq. The UN had over 80,000 soldiers and police and over 15,000 civilians in 18 different peacekeeping missions in 2006.

The UN assisted in the first countrywide election in the Congo, but when the results were announced violence erupted and UN peacekeepers had to restore order.

Post conflict Liberia has many refugees returning home but it has an unemployment rate of 85% and an infrastructure in ruins. UN peacekeepers are helping to rebuild the infrastructure. President Ellen Johnson- Sirleaf, a former UN administrator and the first woman president of an African nation, has a hard road ahead and hopefully will make progress in her difficult task.

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