

North Country Legislative Representatives

Elizabeth O’C Little (45th Senatorial District) Albany Office: Room 903, Legislative Office Bldg, Albany, NY 12247; 455-2811; Fax 426-6873. Plattsburgh Office: 305 West Bay Plaza, Plattsburgh, NY 12901; 561-2430 email: little@senate.state.ny.us

Janet Duprey (114th Assembly District) Albany Office: LOB 937, Albany, NY 12248; 455-5943. District Office: 202 U.S. Oval, Plattsburgh, NY 12901; 562-1986 email: dupreyj@assembly.state.ny.us

Teresa Sayward (113th Assembly District) Phone 455-5565; Fax 455-5710 email: saywart@assembly.state.ny.us

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H
I
N
G
T
O
N

Sen. Hilliary Rodham Clinton
Room 476 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3201
Tel: 202-224-4451 Fax: 202-228-0282
Email: senator@clinton.senate.gov
Web: http://clinton.senate.gov/email_form.html

Governor Eliot Spitzer
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224
518-474-8390 http://161.11.121.121.govemail

Sen. Charles Schumer
313 Hart Office Bldg.,
Washington, DC 20510
Tel: 202-224-6542 Fax: 202-228-3027
Email: senator@schumer.senate.gov
Web: http://www.senate.gov/~schumer

Rep. John McHugh (23rd Congressional District)
Room 2333, Rayburn House Building,
Washington, DC 20515-3223 (Plattsburgh 563-1406)
Tel: 202-225-4611 Fax: 202-226-0621
Email form: www.mchugh.house.gov/zipauth.htm
Web: www.house.gov/mchugh/



**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**

June/July 2008 No. 10

**7 Woodland Hills
Morrisonville, New York 12962**

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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, 7 Woodland Hill, Morrisonville, NY 12962.**

Women in History

Katharine Lee Bates

(August 12, 1859 - March 28, 1929)

Probably best known as the author of the words to "America the Beautiful," Katharine Lee Bates was a prolific poet and a professor of English and head of the English department at Wellesley, where she had been a student in its earliest years.

Her father, a Congregational minister, died when Katharine was less than a month old. Her brothers had to go to work to help support the family, but Katharine was given an education. She received her B.A. from Wellesley College in 1880. She wrote to supplement her income. "Sleep" was published by The Atlantic Monthly during her undergraduate years at Wellesley.

A trip to Colorado in July, 1893 and the view from Pikes Peak inspired Katharine Lee Bates to write the poem, "America the Beautiful," which was published in The Congregationalist two years after she wrote it. The Boston Evening Transcript published a revised version in 1904, and the public adopted the idealistic poem quickly.

Katharine Lee Bates helped found the New England Poetry Club in 1915 and served for a time as its president, and she was involved in a few social reform activities, working for labor reform and planning the College Settlements Association with Vida Scudder. http://womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blbio_bates_katharine_lee.htm

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

Steps to access the Informer:

Log on to www.plattsburgh.ny.lwvnet.org. Click on "The Informer" either on the side bar or main part of the page.

Click on <http://www.lwvny-bulletins.org/Capital%20Region/Plattsburgh.htm>

The next page enables you to click on the latest or past editions of the newsletter. It will ask to either open it up or save it to a disk. You can then print it if you desire. You will get a larger print if you use **legal** size paper.



Coming Soon

National Popular Vote Compact Study

Delegates at the LWVUS Convention in Portland last month adopted a fast-track study of the National Popular Vote Compact. Carol Mullan (TX), former chair of the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee, has been appointed to the 2008-2010 LWVUS Board to chair this study. A consensus meeting should take place in January or February 2009

vote411.org

Election Information You Need

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sity create additional expenses for the state League we propose creation of an endowed fund called the Centennial Fund through the LWVNYS Education Foundation. Monies would be placed in an unrestricted, perpetually endowed fund of the League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation, with annual income used to support ongoing educational operations of the state and local Leagues.



Smart Growth Initiative

With this legislative session winding down, no bill is more important to promoting smart growth and supporting preservation of New York's land and water resources than the State Smarth Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act (S.4369, A.7335) sponsored by Senator LaValle. This is the biggest smart growth initiative that New York State has ever taken. The Assembly has overwhelmingly passed the bill (A.7335). Now we need the Senate to act.

URGE YOUR SENATOR TO PASS THE SMART GROWTH PUBLIC INFRA-STRUCTURE POLICY ACT TODAY, BY CLICKING THE FOLLOWING LINK: <http://capwiz.com/lwvny/issues/alert/>

Independence Day

Independence Day commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, declaring independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain.

Observance

* In 1777, thirteen guns were fired, once at morning and again as evening fell, on July 4 in Bristol, Rhode Island. Philadelphia celebrated the first anniversary in a manner a modern American would find quite familiar: an official dinner for the Continental Congress, toasts, 13-gun salutes, speeches, prayers, music, parades, troop reviews, and fireworks. Ships were decked with red, white, and blue bunting.

* In 1778, General George Washington marked Independence Day with a double ration of rum for his soldiers and an artillery salute. Across the Atlantic Ocean, ambassadors John Adams and Benjamin Franklin held a dinner for their fellow Americans in Paris, France.

* In 1779, July 4 fell on a Sunday. The holiday was celebrated on Monday, July 5.

* In 1781, Massachusetts was the legislature to recognize Independence Day.

* In 1783, Moravians in Salem, North Carolina, held the first celebration of Independence Day in the country with a challenging music program assembled by Johann Friedrich Peter. This work was titled "The Psalm of Joy".

* In 1791 was the first recorded use of the name "Independence Day".

* In 1870, the U.S. Congress made Independence Day an unpaid holiday for federal employees.[1]

* In 1941, Congress changed Independence Day to a paid federal holiday. The residents of Vicksburg, Mississippi, celebrated Independence Day for the first time since July 4, 1863, when the Siege of Vicksburg ended with a Union victory during the American Civil War. (from Wikipedia)



Enjoy Your Summer!



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The state League could improve its issue and advocacy operations and better facilitate those of local Leagues by:

- Expansion of the issue and advocacy function to encompass activities of state administrative agencies;
- Implementation of annual statewide education and advocacy plans, with input from members;
- Frequent and timely communication with local Leagues about the issue and advocacy function;
- Planning for and obtaining additional expertise to facilitate the issue and advocacy function at both the state and local levels. This might include identification of members or hiring of individuals to analyze issues, to develop educational materials, and to advocate before legislative and administrative bodies;
- Training of League members to analyze issues, to generate materials in support of positions, and to lobby at the legislative and administrative levels;
- Provision of administrative and secretarial services, technology, and public relations services to local Leagues as is necessary to improve their issue and advocacy operations;
- Design and publication of materials, as needed.

New Initiatives-Summary of Possible Changes

- Include a new initiatives function as part of its planning process;
- Design and implement a plan to attract young voters;
- Design and implement a plan to create and maintain interactive, on-line voter services and candidate information throughout the State.

Technology-Summary of Possible Changes

- Expansion of the website to include all aspects of League operations, including historical archives and secure member services, with modifications necessary to present the additional information in an easily retrieved manner;
- Adoption of technology, such as SKYPE video conferencing to facilitate face-to-face meeting without the time or expense of travel;
- Adoption of more cutting-edge technology, such as

video streaming, and graphically appealing interactive web technology to update the League’s image and attract younger members;

- Provision of website design and maintenance services to local Leagues;
- Creation of a state-wide production center to design, produce, and mail publications for both the state and local Leagues.

Public Relations-Summary of Possible Changes

- Making public relations a discrete state function, with a statewide position created, either as a director or an off-board specialist, responsible for development of public relations materials for all aspects of League operations, including membership, issues, education, and advocacy, and development;
- Providing public relations services to local Leagues, including design, publication, and distribution services.

Administrative / Secretarial Support

Last, the state League could plan to take over secretarial/administrative functions currently performed by local Leagues. If they so desire, local Leagues should be freed from administrative functions such as production of their Voters and other documents, website maintenance, and performance of secretarial public relations functions.

Personnel Implications for the Future

The League’s authority has been, and in large part will continue to remain, a function of its status as a volunteer organization. By envisioning a League with centralization of additional services at the state level, we would hope to avoid duplication of effort and free our bright, energetic, and creative members to do what they do best. Although the volunteer paradigm is the ideal, we must be prepared to hire staff at the state level when we are unable to obtain the type and level of necessary services through volunteers.

Funding The Future

Because centralization of services would of neces-

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The Informer

League of Women Voters
of the Plattsburgh Area



June/July 2008

President
Myra Decker 643-2742
mystdek7@northnet.org

Stasia Arcarese 561-1745
“Informer” Editor
larry.arcarese@verizon.net

Madeleine Robinson
Circulation 834-7516
robinson7516@charter.net

League of Women Voter’s Annual Meeting Photos



Marcia Merrons



Marcia Merrons, Myra Decker, Betty Ann, Jim King, Tom Metz

April 30, 2008



Bottom right to left: Myra Decker, Betty Ann King, Jim King, Tom Metz, Kathie Wunderlich, Elle Berger, Jan Forsman, Madeleine Robinson, June Heming, Barbara Landes. President but not in photo was Cesca Hartnett.

Annual Meeting Speaker

by Betsy Metz



Marcia Merrins, President, LWV Chautauqua and LWVNYS VP, Nominee for LWVUS Board, Past President of the LWVNYS, 2003-2007 was the guest speaker at the League's

annual dinner meeting on April 30, 2008. She discussed the current state and future of the League of Women Voters. The League is very viable in today's political climate. The strong non-partisan policy provides credibility. Activities provide a link between members and potential ones.

As the League in New York State is ending its first 100 years, members are assessing the challenges of the future. The League has evolved beyond educating women about the issues of the day. The pace of change has exponentially accelerated. Cell phones and computers with email have launched an explosion of speed and volume of instant information. To these and future changes, the League must be agile and responsive.

Fewer people are doing more. Membership declined when women joined the workforce. The LWVNYS office staff consists of one full-time executive director, one program director and one part-time receptionist. Locally Leagues provide voter service and forward state information. Advocacy, especially as related to HAVA, has been the most recent primary achievement. In NYS the voter verified paper ballot optical scan voting machine is a major victory.

Evaluation of the League was accomplished through the following:

- S.W.A.T. analysis
- Recommendations from members
- Ida Trager workshops

The resulting Centennial Plan identified the strength of the League at the grassroots level in the key areas of education and advocacy. The League fills special needs no other organization can. Research and study are pivotal in providing League programs. Financial stability is vital. Creation of an endowment fund is essential.

- Raise \$1.5 million in 7 years from foundations, corporate members, and planned giving
- Have \$8 million in assets by Centennial celebration 2119 plus building maintenance and ownership
- Note the member PMPs pay about 30% of expenses

Following Qs and As, Marcia closed with a warm invitation to attend state and national activities - to meet fellow Leaguers and participate in the broad spectrum of programs.



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The world of the twenty-first century is increasingly specialized, professionalized, and factionalized. The exponential increase in information citizens are asked to digest leaves all subject to manipulation by the special interest that is able to throw the most money at a problem. The reality of globalization and national and international multi-culturalism pose particular threats for democratic institutions at the local, state, national, and international levels. At a time when information is reduced to the sound bite and mass media reigns, the League remains relevant and essential to the strength of our democratic institutions in a number of ways:

- Its non-partisan nature and method of formulating positions after study of issues gives it a credibility not enjoyed by partisan or single-issue organizations. It is currently one of the organizations most trusted by our country's citizens, and this trust gives it credibility in the advocacy arena;
- Its grass-roots structure and multi-issue focus give it the flexibility to identify, study, and advocate for breaking issues at all levels, from the local to the international. Thus it is able to achieve a breadth of coverage not possible for organizations limited in the scope of issues covered or areas of operation;
- It provides valuable educational services not provided by other organizations. This is especially true at the local level, where it publishes materials and conducts local forums about current local issues, and provides ongoing voter service information in the form of voters guides and candidate forums. League moderators of candidate forums remain in the eyes of both the public and candidates as the gold standard of impartiality;
- It provides a mechanism for members to become politically involved in a nurturing, mentored environment, where education, careful study, and an open mind are valued and fostered and provide a backbone to the organization's mission. Few, if any, organizations foster involvement without requiring that members commit to a position on an issue or a specific point of view.

Review of Operations

Over the past year the League has conducted an analysis of current operations, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of its structure and brainstorming about ways in which this structure might be improved.

A Framework for the Future

. It is the goal of this document is to plan for a future in which the state League has sufficient resources so that it can relieve local Leagues of much of the burden of their daily operations. This principle might be applied in the following eight areas:

Membership-Summary of Possible Changes

The state League could aid local Leagues in attracting new members by:

- Identifying and disseminating best practices;
- Developing protocols for attracting underrepresented groups;
- Designing and producing innovative membership materials, including public relations spots;
- Providing membership support through administrative and secretarial, public relations, and technology services.

Financial Services-Summary of Possible Changes

The state League could aid local Leagues in collecting dues and raising money by:

- Offering centralized production and mailing of membership renewal and fundraising letters;
- Offering bookkeeping and other financial services.

Voter Services-Summary of Possible Changes

The state League could improve its voter service activities and those of local Leagues by:

- Development, funding, and maintenance of an on-line, interactive voter services website along the lines of Smart Voter.
- Supporting local Leagues in their activities by design and publication of materials, as needed.

Issues and Advocacy-Summary of Possible Changes

THE CENTENNIAL PLAN-Draft A ROAD-MAP FOR THE FUTURE

OUR MANDATE

As the League of Women Voters of New York State approaches the end of its first hundred years, it faces the challenge of planning for a future that its founding members could not have envisioned. From its formation in 1919 to help recently enfranchised women carry out their new responsibilities, it evolved into a unique, nonpartisan organization that is a recognized force in molding political leaders, shaping public policy and promoting informed citizen participation at all levels of government. Its tripartite model of study, education, and action is the gold standard for citizen action groups.

In the educational arena, local Leagues are at the forefront in educating citizens about salient local issues. Their voter services activities, such as candidate forums and voter guides remain a major force in educating voters about local elections.

In the advocacy arena, local Leagues enjoy both the local citizen base and the flexibility to respond quickly to matters of import to their communities. The New York State League has been a tireless advocate for campaign finance reform, ethics reform, full and meaningful transparency of government with disclosure to the public, nonpartisan redistricting reform, and adoption of a unified judicial system and merit selection of judges. League members are frequently asked to serve on statewide commissions. Recently, League representatives served on the Commission to Promote Public Confidence in Judicial Elections (Feerick Commission) and the Citizens' Election Modernization Advisory Committee, making recommendations for New York State implementation of Help America Vote Act (HAVA). It was because of its study of electronic voting systems (DREs) and ballot marker/optical scan technology, that the LWVNY concluded that the current state of electronic voting systems was insufficiently sophisticated to protect the security of the vote. The League's education of citizens and

officials, lobbying, and litigation against the adoption of DREs within the state is believed to have successfully influenced the choice of ballot marker/optical scan systems. Without the League's action in this arena, it is unlikely the same result would have been reached and New York State may have incurred expenditures of millions of dollars to replace flawed systems. The League's Legislative Director served on Governor Spitzer's transition team, where she chaired a subcommittee making recommendations for good government initiatives.

The constantly accelerating rate of change makes reevaluation of our goals and review of our methods essential to continued efficacy. In preparation for our upcoming centennial anniversary, we have taken the opportunity to develop a road map for the twenty-first century.

OUR PLANNING PROCESS

The Current Operations

New York State currently has 51 local Leagues, 3 Inter-League Organizations, and 1 Member At-Large Unit. The state League office is currently staffed with a full-time Executive Director, full-time Program Director, and part-time receptionist/Secretary. The remainder of its program is implemented by an active and articulate cohort of citizen volunteers.

The Current Challenges

Women now compete with men in the workplace, leaving limited time for the volunteer activity that has always been the backbone of the League. As time becomes more precious, local Leagues are so consumed with the administrative operations, of recruiting members, filling board positions, maintaining websites, and publishing monthly newsletters that they have limited time for the study, education, and advocacy operations that attracted their members in the first place.

The same conditions that pose challenges for the League make it imperative that the League survive.

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League News



Post-Convention News Online

Go to lwv.org to read the news from Convention 2008. Please check this page periodically in the coming days as new items, including many of the reports and speeches delivered in Portland as well as the Climate Change panel presentations, will be added as they become available.

League Urges Senators Obama and McCain to Disclose Details of Funders

Go to lwv.org to read letters the League and watchdog organizations sent urging Senators Barack Obama and John McCain to reveal more details about fundraisers for their presidential campaigns, for press release and for highlights in media coverage.

League Urges Court to Protect Minority Voters' Rights

Go to lwv.org for details about an amicus brief, in which the League asked the Supreme Court to protect fair voting districts by holding that the Voting Rights Act does not require a minority community's size to meet a rigid numerical quota.

League and Partners Send Letter Supporting Disabilities Legislation

Go to lwv.org to read a letter the League and civil rights partners sent to Congress urging Members to vote in favor of final passage of H.R. 3195 and against all amendments.

League Partners with AAUW

The LWVUS and AAUW encourage Leagues and AAUW branches to work together on voter outreach and education activities, as some localities have done in the past. By pooling resources, volunteers and expertise, we can extend our reach and build on our history of collaboration and partnership.

Live From Times Square: The LWV

The League's voter registration public service announcement featuring Oscar-nominated actress Virginia Madsen was recently featured on the

Reuters banner in Times Square. www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=11510

"Electing the President" Newspaper Supplement Update

The LWVUS and the Newspaper in Education Institute (NIE) created a newspaper supplement of election information for young voters, students and others. Download this supplement, "Electing the President," www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Voters_Service_Chair&CONTENTID=10594&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm

Safeguarding U.S. Democracy Debuts on YouTube!

Go to <http://youtube.com/watch?v=AQ--GqUvaIM> to check out the YouTube video created by the LWVUS Safeguarding U.S. Democracy program. The video describes the program, recent program activities and upcoming projects.

Convention 2008 Workshops Successful

Go to www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Judicial_Independence&CONTENTID=11503&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm to read about the "Standing Up for Strong Courts" workshop with Oregon Chief Justice Paul J. De Muniz and Mary McQueen, president of the National Center for State Courts. Go to www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Global_Democracy&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=11502 to read about the "Citizen Diplomacy: The Importance of an Informed Citizen" workshop with Sherry Mueller, National Council for International Visitors president and Sally Davenport, LWV of Tucson (AZ) member.

New 18-30 Voter Issues Paper Now Available!

The Smackdown Your Vote! partners recently published an updated 18-30 Voter Issues Paper (VIP) designed to foster dialogue between candidates and young voters. The brochure highlights important political questions, motivating young men and woman to get involved in the electoral process.

League Urges Senate to Support and Strengthen Climate Security Act of 2008

Dear Senator,

The undersigned organizations urge you to support amendments to strengthen the Climate Security Act of 2008, oppose amendments to weaken it, and pass subsequent strong global warming legislation. As the first step to strengthening and passing a strong bill, we ask you to support cloture on the Boxer substitute when it comes to a vote likely late today or tomorrow. The scientific consensus on global warming demands action as soon as possible to avoid the worst effects that have been predicted. These include sea-level rise, intense storms, drought, floods, and mass species extinction.

While this bill breaks new ground in developing an economy-wide carbon control regime, there are still improvements that will better assure that the nation is able to reach the targets in the bill with the minimum negative economic impact on vulnerable communities and consumers. In addition, our nation must be able to adapt and respond to new scientific knowledge that develops over the life the program.

Despite the imperative for action to stem global warming, many staunch defenders of the status quo have pledged to offer amendments that would weaken or cripple the integrity of the carbon-reduction system developed by S. 3036. Whether their goal is borne of the distrust of science or allegiance to existing large energy providers, passage of many of their amendments would disable any attempt to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. This would leave the U.S. with no ability to show the rest of the world we have responded to the challenge of global warming, and would fail to protect our citizens from its effects.

We strongly urge you to support the following strengthening amendments:

- **Scientific Review (Kerry – Feinstein -- Snowe):** The Amendment would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the president to

quickly propose new legislation to adjust the emissions reduction framework—including targets and timelines—based on National Academy of Sciences (NAS) findings. It would also call for expedited congressional action to speed passage of these proposed adjustments.

- **Consumer and Job Protection (Whitehouse):** The amendment would ensure that funds are available each year to fully cover the increased costs of goods and services for the bottom income quintile and phase out the assistance over the second income quintile. The amendment would also increase funding for green jobs. The amendment preserves and strengthens the role of Local Distribution Companies (LDC) to prioritize energy efficiency programs.

- **Clean Energy Amendment (Menendez – Lautenberg):** To remedy both the cut in funding to renewable energy and the projected windfall profits for fossil fuel generators, this Polluter Pays Amendment will end the practice of fossil fuel generators receiving free allowances after 10 years and move the savings to the states. Cumulatively, between 2012 and 2030, this proposal would transfer about \$200 billion from fossil fuel generation transition to the states. States would then be required to spend a portion of this money on renewable energy, energy efficiency, worker transition, and low-income consumer assistance.

- **Energy Efficiency Amendment (Feinstein – Snowe):** This amendment would strengthen the energy efficiency provisions in the bill in several ways. The potential sponsors have not yet developed final language, but expect to shortly.

- **International Forest Protection (Menendez – Kerry):** This amendment would increase funding for the set-aside to prevent emissions from tropical deforestation. The funding would be offset by a reduction in the transition assistance to the refiners of petroleum-based fuels.

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- **Renewable Electricity Standard (Klobuchar – Sanders):** This amendment would require that states generate at least 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020.

- **International Adaptation (Menendez-Snowe):** This amendment would increase the near-term funding for the International Adaptation and National Security program. The funding would be offset by a reduction in the transition assistance to the largest oil companies’ refiners.

- **Transportation Alternatives and Public Transportation (Cardin-Carper):** This Amendment would ensure that funding of Section 611 on mass transit is specifically tied to demonstrable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. It also maximizes the impact of funded projects by increasing the flexibility of the uses of funding, and includes regional government entities as eligible recipients for certain planning, data collection, and modeling expenditures.

While it is still unclear who would offer the weakening amendments described below, we urge you to aggressively oppose amendments that do the following:

- **SAFETY VALVE --** An amendment may be offered that freezes the price of carbon allowances at a specific price. That would break the cap and allow significantly higher emissions than called for in the bill.

- **NUCLEAR GIVE-AWAY --** Some Senators want to use a global warming bill to give billions to the nuclear industry to build new power plants, one of our worst options for addressing global warming. We will likely see an amendment or series of amendments that would do this.

- **DIVERT AUCTION REVENUES AWAY FROM CRITICAL PUBLIC PURPOSES --** We may see one or more amendments that would redirect revenues raised from auctioning pollution allowances

away from the very investments needed to meet emissions reduction targets. This amendment would slow down or stop development of the clean energy solutions needed to move us away from fossil fuels, and would eliminate critical assistance that addresses global warming’s harmful impacts on vulnerable communities, infrastructure, and natural resources.

- **UNLIMITED OFFSETS --** A Senator may offer an amendment that would allow polluters to buy unlimited offsets, meaning that they would not have to reduce their own pollution at all and would be able to fully buy their way out of meeting reduction requirements.

- **PRE-EMPTION --** We may see an amendment that pre-empts state activities on global warming, including eviscerating the California carbon tailpipe standards for cars and light trucks that have been joined by 13 states.

- **GAS PRICES --** Opponents of action on global warming will likely try to exploit current high gas prices for political gain and as a reason not to act on the problem. Such an amendment might terminate the program if gas prices reach \$4.50 per gallon.

- **MASSACHUSETTS v. EPA -** We may see an amendment that seeks to overturn last year’s landmark Supreme Court decision which declared that EPA has the authority to regulate greenhouse gas pollution.

We look forward to working with you and your staffs to help craft solutions to global warming that are effective and equitable. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Clean Water Action, Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, Environment America, League of Conservation Voters, LWV, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources, Defense Council, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sierra Club, Union of Concerned Scientists