

February- March,
Issue 5

Special Interest
Articles:

- Next consensus meeting will be on Immigration Reform.
- Project VoteSmart bus visits Troy.
- Forum on Health Care coming in March: all are invited.

**Individual
Highlights:**

Co-Presidents	
Letter	2
Troy City Charter	
Revision	3
Health Forum	4
Immigration	6
New Members	7

The Voter



League of Women Voters, Rensselaer County Ny

Save the Date: Consensus Meeting

All members of the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County are very welcome to attend the upcoming Consensus Meeting on **Immigration.**

The meeting will be on Thursday, January 31

from 7 to 9:30 pm

at Emma Willard School

see inside for details on location

and parking

Hope to See You There

Who's Sick? The Patient or the System?

Health Care Crisis: Where Do We Go From Here?

Saturday, March 8

from 10 am to noon

at the Arts Center of the Capital District

River Street, Troy

Panel discussion see inside for details

All League Members and the General Public are invited and encouraged to attend.

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*Bpard Meeting Agenda/Mail, Maintain
Calendar, Board List, New Member
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Letter from the Co-Presidents

By the time you read this, the Iowa Caucus, the New Hampshire and Michigan primaries, and the Nevada caucus will be history; Election Campaign 2008 is now fully underway. As the campaign issues become increasingly prioritized, it is clear that immigration is one of the top issues, with some states issuing their own immigration laws. We hope that many of you will have attended our Holiday Get-Together January 17, when member and immigration lawyer Jill Nagy helped us begin to consider the LWVUS immigration study consensus questions. Our consensus meeting will take place on Thursday, January 31. Be sure to visit our website for further information - place, date, time, etc. On Sunday, December 30 the New York Times posed these questions for all voters:

"What should be the role of immigrant labor in our economy? How does the country maximize its benefits and lessen its ill effects? Once the border is fortified, what happens to the 12 million illegal immigrants already here? Should they be expelled or allowed to assimilate? How? And what about the companies that hire them? And what about the future flow of workers? Should the current system of legal immigration, with its chronic backlogs and morbid inefficiencies, be tweaked or trashed? What is the proper role of state and local governments in enforcing immigration laws? And will a national identity card bring on Big Brother for everyone?"

On November 17 the Project VoteSmart bus enjoyed a successful visit to Troy. We were very pleased that, thanks to Mayor Tutunjian, the City of Troy became our first co-sponsor. Others were the League of Women Voters of Albany County, the Troy Farmers Market, the NAACP, ARISE, RPI, Russell Sage College, and Emma Willard School. We are indeed grateful to all who helped make this visit possible and especially to board member Anne Burton for contacting all area media.

Recently, it was announced that Mayor Tutunjian has appointed a commission to re-examine the Troy City Charter. We will be watching their deliberations with special concern. Finally, we will sponsor a Health Forum in March. Look for details later this winter. Our thanks to board member Donna Packard-Mahoney for all her work in making this possible.

Marcia and Gail

League Immigration Consensus Meeting
Thursday, January 31, 7-9:30 pm at
Kellas Meeting Room, Emma Willard School
285 Pawling Avenue, Troy

Enter through the Elmgrove Avenue entrance and follow the drive around to the back side of the gym to the parking lot. From the parking lot walk on the path to the Archway entrance opposite the Elmgrove Gate. Security guards will direct you to the meeting room.

Those who wish, can be dropped off at the Archway before the driver proceeds to the parking lot.

We will keep to strict time restraints so that we can end the meeting as soon as possible, preferably by 9 pm.

Troy City Charter Revision Commission

The mayor of Troy has recently announced the creation of a commission to study the current city charter with the aim of revising it to streamline operations. The commission of fifteen members includes several employees of City Hall and few members of the general public.

As reported in the Times Union of Jan. 12: "Troy Charter Commission members: **Peter Kehoe**, chairman, former city corporation counsel, **Robert Mirch** (vice chairman, majority leader Rensselaer County Legislature and public works commissioner), **Len Tyson**, (Lansingburgh resident), **Beverly Traa**, (downtown resident and former Republican City Council candidate), **Jack Smith** (South Troy resident), **Patrick Russo** (Rensselaer County undersheriff), Troy City School District Board of Education president **Jason Schofield**, deputy mayor **Dan Crawly**, Councilman **William Dunne** (president pro-tem of City Council), City Council President **Clement Campana**, Councilman **Henry Bauer**, **Flora O'Malley** (former city clerk), **Jeff Buell**, (mayoral aide and spokesman), **Jim Walsh** (Industrial Development Agency chairman), **Steve Dworsky** (former city manager).

Mayor Tutunjian said the charter enacted in 1994 is long overdue for review. The 2002 charter changes dealt solely with the term limits.

"The last charter commission dealt only with term limits when so many other issues needed to be tackled. This commission will serve in the exact opposite manner, taking a keen look at all of the important issues facing Troy today," Tutunjian said.

The panel's recommendations for changing the charter would go to voters for approval."

League members who are interested in monitoring and perhaps participating in the work of the recently created Charter Review Commission should contact Margaret Story at 272-1566.

Speakers at the Health Forum, Saturday March 8

James D. Sinkoff,

Mr. Sinkoff started his healthcare career in 1983 with the firm of Ernst & Young serving a broad range of healthcare clients including hospitals, nursing homes and physician groups. After leaving Ernst & Young and moving to the Capital Region, Mr. Sinkoff directed the managed care operations for the Berkshire Health Systems, located in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. As his interest in healthcare expanded, Mr. Sinkoff became the Chief Financial Officer for Fidelis Care New York assisting in the completion of the purchase of Better Health Plan to achieve the goal of creating the first in the nation Catholic Sponsored statewide Medicaid managed care plan. This experience led to additional efforts with the Managed Care Assistance Corporation and the National Association of Community Health Centers to create statewide Medicaid Managed Care plans in Florida, South Carolina and Georgia. These experiences further impassioned Mr. Sinkoff's interest in community health and shortly thereafter he joined the Whitney M. Young Jr. Health Center in 1998 as its CFO and then as its CEO in 2000; the position he currently holds. Over the past eight years, Mr. Sinkoff has worked to bring the Health Center to the community and vice-versa through a deliberate effort of expansion, collaboration and community building.

Richard Kirsch

Richard Kirsch is Executive Director of Citizen Action of New York, a grassroots citizen's organization with 20,000 members and seven offices in New York. Mr. Kirsch also serves as Executive Director of the Public Policy and Education Fund of New York, a research and educational foundation affiliated with Citizen Action. Mr. Kirsch has led successful campaigns to provide affordable, comprehensive health coverage to more than one-million working families in New York. He is an author of New York's Managed Care Bill of Rights, among the strongest HMO protection. Mr. Kirsch helped direct a 1998 ballot initiative campaign that resulted in dramatic improvements in New York City's system of providing public financing of elections. Mr. Kirsch is the author of several studies on health care reform including: the Managed Care Bill of Rights: A Health Care Policy Guide for Consumer Advocates; the financing of universal health care; health and health system global budgeting; and risk management. He has published oped pieces on health care, tax policy, telecommunications, energy policy and election reform. Mr. Kirsch is also the author of several reports on the financing of election campaigns in New York.

Paul Sorum, MD

Dr. Sorum is a Professor of Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Albany Medical College, a primary care practitioner for children and adults in Latham, and the chair of the Capital District chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program. He teaches evidence-based medicine; does research with psychologists in the US and France on judgment and decision making about health issues; and writes about the French health care system.

Voting Machines Controversy: The USDOJ and the NYS BOE

January 14, 2008

I. December 20, 2007 Court Hearing

On December 20, the defendants (NYSBOE), and plaintiffs (USA), met in an open hearing in the Federal District Court for the Northern District of NY. In his introductory remarks, Judge Sharpe expressed his utter dissatisfaction (and shame) for NYS's flaunting of federal law and ultimately said, "non compliance is not an answer." These remarks set the stage for his determination to bring NY into compliance immediately. He threatened to appoint a Special Master to oversee the process unless the NYS BOE commissioners submitted a single plan (the Dems and Reps had submitted two separate plans on December 4). He even threatened jail time for the four commissioners if they didn't comply! That plan will be based on the Democratic proposal, also known as the Zalen plan which had specific dates and is based on a 2008-09 full machine replacement schedule. He agreed with the US DOJ that NYS must immediately move to provide full poll site accessibility for the fall 2008 federal elections through using ballot marking devices (BMDs). The Court did not acknowledge that NY's problems with compliance were understandable and beyond the state's control. (The independent testing authority NY had hired, CIBER, was disqualified by the federal EAC in January 2007 and a new testing authority had to be found. A new ITA received the state contract in late November 2007). The Court implied it would be willing to allow lever voting machines to be replaced in 2009 (the Zalen plan proposed the same date).

The "Friend of the Court" (amicus curiae) briefs submitted by the LWVNYS/NYVV/NYPIRG/CANY was accepted by the Court, as were those of other organizations.\

II. The NYS BOE Plan of January 4, 2008

The NYS BOE filed their compliance plan with the Court on January 4, 2008. The BOE plan is subject to the Court and the DOJ agreement to accept it. The basic points in the plan are as follows:

1. **on January 23**, the NYS BOE will notify counties which ballot marking devices (BMDs) have received preliminary approval based on their meeting basic state requirements.
2. **on February 8**, the counties must make their preference known to the state. The state will not have completed testing of the machines until February 25 but the BOE reserves the power under NYS Election Law to authorize the use of BMDs not formally certified by it upon an experimental basis to insure it is logistically possible to have the devices at every polling place in September.

III. What Does This Mean for NYS Voters?

The specific dates for selection of BMDs will force counties to make a decision before complete testing of the machines has occurred. The BOE has accepted DREs as part of their compliance plan. Counties will choose BMDs for 2008 use which will be part of their 2009 replacement plan, a prudent decision in view of limited resources. We want them to choose BMDs which can be part of an optical scan solution.

What Can Advocates for PBOS do to Affect Their Choice?

County election commissioners should be urged to purchase BMDs which are compatible with optical scanners and to reject DREs. The following BMDs are expected to be submitted for testing and would meet our criteria:

1. AutoMark (two versions, to be used with either the ES&S scanner or the Premier/Diebold scanner)
2. Sequoia-Dominion "Image Cast", a new machine introduced in 2007.

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Immigration Reform

At the Jan. 17 post-holiday get-together, League member and immigration lawyer Jill Nagy gave a presentation on immigration issues to help members consider positions for the consensus meeting on this topic scheduled for Jan. 31.

Jill gave a quick overview of the U.S. immigration system. She said current immigration law essentially promotes the immigration of two categories of individuals: workers whose skills are in high demand in the United States, such as scientists and researchers, and family members of U.S. citizens and legal residents. There are special programs for refugees. Some immigrants who do not fit in these categories are admitted through a visa lottery program. Also, employers wishing to bring workers in to fill jobs for which American citizens are not available may petition for H1B temporary visas, initially good for six years.

It is estimated that there are 10-15 million foreigners living illegally in the United States. Jill said it is believed that about half of them originally entered the country legally. She pointed out that the United States has never developed a system to track foreigners once they enter the country. Americans have a wide range of attitudes toward illegal immigrants, and unfortunately compromise positions are elusive.

Jill stressed that immigration policy in the end reflects a country's moral values political compromises.

Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates

Your chapter of the League of Women Voters is in need of persons to serve in the positions of Co-President, Vice President, Treasurer, and three positions on the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee, made up of off-Board members Jill Nagy, Millie Estes, and Jane Ducatt, and Board members Diane Bell and Anne Burton, will be meeting soon so that a slate of candidates may be presented at the Annual Meeting in May, 2008. Now is a wonderful time to become more active in the League. Contact any of the committee members if you have questions, to suggest a candidate, or to toss your hat into the ring.

Vote Smart Bus visit a Success!

According to the Troy Record, over 250 individuals visited the Vote Smart Bus when it came to Troy last November, thanks to Marcie Easterling, who did all the preliminary work prior to November 17! The bus was an interactive learning experience on voting records and issues. Visitors to the bus were able to view a short film and were able to do a research on voting records and candidate bios that were on laptops at the rear of the bus. The city of Troy and Mayor Tutunjian were co-sponsors, and had blocked off an area of Troy near the Farmers' Market entrance. Rensselaer County League members that were present included Gail DeMarco, Nina Pattison, Diane Bell, Anne Burton, and Ginny Foster, a non-League visitor who did the photography.

Other cosponsors included Russell Sage College, the Emma Willard School, the League of Women Voters of Albany County, the Troy Farmers' Market, NAACP, ARISE, and RPI. The Vote Smart Bus is staffed by 2 dedicated professionals and receives contributions from individuals to keep it and their research team at work. Thanks to all that visited the bus and to those who helped to arrange the visit! For further information you can go to VoteSmart.org.

By Anne Burton

Welcome New Members

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Martha E. Walsh
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CALENDAR

February 2008

- 1 Immigration Consensus Meeting data due into LWVUS
- 6 Rensselaer County Legislature, Open Forum, Wednesday., 6 pm
- 7 Troy City Council, Thursday, 7 pm
- 12 Rensselaer County Legislature, Open Forum, Wednesday., 6 pm
- 18 Presidents' Day, Monday
- 21 **LWVRC Board Meeting, 7 pm, Krause Center, Troy**

March 2008

- 5 Rensselaer County Legislature, Open Forum, Wednesday, 6 pm
- 6 Troy City Council, Thursday, 7 pm
- 8 General Membership Meeting - Health Forum (10 am to Noon, Arts Center Troy)**
- 11 Rensselaer County Legislature, Monthly Meeting, Tuesday, 6 pm
- 13 **LWVRC Board Meeting, 7 pm, Krause Center, Troy**



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS, RENSSELAER
COUNTY NY**
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