

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

BULLETIN

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of SCHENECTADY COUNTY, NEW YORK

OCTOBER 2008

Deadline for Voter Registration: October 10

CANDIDATES' FORUM

Wednesday, October 22, 7-9 p.m.

Schenectady County Library, McChesney Room
99 Clinton Street, Schenectady

Participants include candidates for the following offices:

21st U.S. Congressional District
44th NYS Senate District
105th NYS Assembly District
110th NYS Assembly District
Schenectady City Court Judge

*Sponsored by The League of Women Voters of Schenectady County
and the American Association of University Women*

Open to the public

FRIENDLY LUNCH at the GOLDEN PHOENIX Restaurant **St. James Square, Niskayuna** **at Noon on Tuesday, October 28**

Bob Freeman, the Executive Director of the Committee on Open Government
will inform us about the new law affecting Freedom of Information (FOIL).

*Get there a little early to pick up your lunch and bring it to the side room. Call Connie for more information 393-7061.
More about Bob Freeman inside.*

WHEN YOU PULL THE LEVER ON NOVEMBER 4, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR HEALTH CARE?

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 10 am to 12 pm

Rockefeller Institute in Albany
411 State Street

*A collaboration of 4 regional Leagues is presenting a discussion of health care proposals supported by the major parties and
the effect they would have on us if implemented. Bring your friends and join us.*

Call Pat Kessler, 374-2713 or email patkessler@aol.com for more information

President's Column

By Joanne Tobiessen

Greetings!

With an important election coming up soon and the financial world in turmoil, we also see our neighbors putting out their annual pumpkin displays and trees changing into their beautiful fall colors; much is changing or about to change, and much is staying the same. It is a good time to look at what is important to us. What do you value for you and your family, your community, your country? For the League, it would be an informed electorate, which is actively engaged in the democratic process.

This month, our League is co-hosting our pre-election Candidates' Forum on October 22nd. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear from and question those local candidates who hope to represent us. We'll also be hearing more about the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) on October 28th and the major parties' proposals on health care reform on October 25th. Join us for these informative programs.

We will also be welcoming a visitor from Argentina (through the International Center of the Capital Region) who is interested in American non-governmental organizations and citizen participation in grass roots democracy. We are continuing to help register new voters around the County, and LeaderSpark starts this month.

In considering what you value, we hope it includes being involved in our active Schenectady League of Women Voters. Joanne

LEADERSPARK PROGRAM COMMENCING SOON

Beginning Sunday, October 19, we will be conducting the LeaderSpark Program again. We will be running the program for six Sundays until November 23 from 1:30-5:30 in the afternoon. The program will be held at the YWCA.

If you need any more info

If you have any prospective students or

If you wish to volunteer contact Mary Pritchard at 374-0607 or email at

apritchard@nycap.rr.com

Check out the testimonial of a teacher whose students participated in the past in this publication.

Congratulations!

Long-time member and activist Helen Quirini,
the Senior of the Year Award given
by the Catholic Charities of Schenectady. as

Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase the understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

President: Joanne Tobiessen.....393-0477

Vice-President: Connie Young.....393-7061

Newsletter Editor: Helen MacDonald... 346-7006

LWV URGES LEGISLATURE TO FOLLOW RESOLUTION

Submitted by Nancy Peterson, Environment Committee Chair

At the Sept. 9 County Legislature public hearing about SCCC dormitories, three members of the LWV Environment Committee made statements advocating that LEED building standards be followed, according to Resolution 65-08, passed by Schenectady County Legislature on April 4. Two officials from SCCC spoke about the importance of the immediate commencement of the dormitory construction project.

After the hearing, several Legislators spoke to the issue as follows:

- Gary Hughes stated that this is not, strictly speaking, a County project, since there is a State regulation against SCCC ownership of this facility.
- Joe Suhrada stated that, although the building will include a number of green features, it will not qualify for LEED certification, and the Legislature is disingenuous in not following the Resolution it passed. Although not owned by the County, it is under the auspices of the County, and should follow this Resolution.
- Bob Farley stated that legally the Community College Foundation has to be the owner because of the State restriction on SCCC ownership.
- Vince DeCerbo mentioned that SCCC is offering some four-year programs, in conjunction with SUNY Delhi, and it's very important that this project get underway.

The vote was called, and the site for this construction was unanimously approved, at 117 Washington Ave, the Armory parking lot.

The Local Development Corporation, set up by Metroplex for the purpose of overseeing and managing this project, met on Sept 12 with their attorney. They are handling the contracts and the capital for this project. I was given the opportunity to present the statement I had made at the hearing on the 9th. I had copies of this statement for each member of the LDC, speaking in favor of following the LEED construction standards set forth in Resolution 65-08 made by the Legislature in April. They politely accepted my paper, but it was fairly obvious that they intend to go ahead with this project not seeking LEED certification. The LEED application would delay the project and there would be a fee.

The argument that this is not a County project made at the Sept. 9 hearing was negated; the LDC acknowledged that it is an arm of the County Legislature. In Resolution 65-08, the County included clauses wherein they could find reason to not follow LEED standards, as they apparently have chosen to do with the SCCC student housing, SCEAC is drafting a statement urging them to follow their April resolution.

WIND ENERGY FORUM

The Environment Committee was a cosponsor of the Wind Forum program, held in the McChesney Room on September 17. Ty Remington of GE Energy gave a presentation about GE's involvement in developing wind turbines and their plan to install one at their Schenectady site. (It has had to be moved a quarter mile from the original site, to accommodate the Schenectady airport flyway.) This was followed by brief presentations by a panel, followed by many questions from the audience. The event was well-attended, in spite of not having prior Gazette coverage.

Environment Committee Meeting

The next meeting of the Environment Committee will be on Monday, October 6 at noon. The meeting will be held at the Channel 16 SAAC-TV Studio on Jay St. in the board room. All are welcome.

REPORT ON LEADERSPARK GRADS

Submitted by Mary Okeeffe, Advisor of the Albany Area Math Circle

The students I have nominated for LeaderSpark have all been extremely positive in describing their experiences in the program.

- Liz Wingfield, who participated in Schenectady LeaderSpark in June 2006, is now a student at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. Last year she was president of the SCCC Student Government Association (after previously servicing as a student senator and then as vp) and she was honored with SCCC's top award as their "Student of the Year 2007-2008" for her many contribution to the SCCC student community. She was also active in the drama club, science club, and wrote for the college newspaper.
- Susanna Krewson (also LeaderSpark 2006) is now a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania, where she is a Benjamin Franklin Scholar, an honor reserved for their top incoming students. (About 100 out of each entering class of 1600 receive this honor.)
- Nicole Bieber (also LeaderSpark 2006) is a junior at MIT who just returned from a very prestigious summer internship at Microsoft (it is very rare for students to get this internship at such an early stage of their college career. In the previous summer, Nicole worked as a mentor and staff member for high school students enrolled in MIT's Women in Technology summer program.)

More recent LeaderSpark graduates whom I have nominated are also doing very well. Zagreb Mukerjee (LeaderSpark fall 2007) treasured his opportunity to participate in the Inside Albany program last spring. He had the opportunity to participate in the excellent and very prestigious Telluride summer program in the humanities at Cornell last summer (TASP). Selection for TASP is highly competitive and required an extensive interview--his LeaderSpark experiences were excellent preparation for that interview.

Many of the more recent LeaderSpark graduates are still in the area and they are doing a fantastic job of mentoring and coaching younger students in math study circles. I believe their LeaderSpark training has helped their poise, confidence, and overall leadership style in this work.

I have contacted a few students about participating this fall, and I got an immediate "Yes! yes! yes!" from one of them, because he and his family had heard such good things about the experiences of other students in the program. I know you will get several applications from Albany Area Math Circle members again this year.

FRIENDLY LUNCH WITH BOB FREEMAN

Bob Freeman is the Executive Director of the Committee on Open Government. On Tuesday, October 28 he is coming to our Friendly Lunch to explain the new (FOIL) Freedom of Information Laws. He has summarized the new law's impact and provided a great deal of information on the Committee on Open Government website. On this same website he has also given a very in-depth explanation of the new time limits.

The Committee on Open Government website is very useful. It has various publications available on line including, Your Right to Know, FOIL FAQs and Open Meetings Law FAQs, as well as the actual statutory language of the Freedom of Information Law and the Open Meetings Law. Finally, the Committee has also put its Advisory Opinions online with the opinions listed alphabetically by key phrase. Thus, if you have a specific issue (e.g. are building permits subject to FOIL?), chances are that Bob Freeman has already written an opinion on the subject. If you have questions or would like to discuss this issue further, Bob can be reached at 474-2518

MEMBERSHIP

Submitted by Lynda Nichols, Membership Chair

Thanks to all of you who have renewed your membership for the 2008-2009 year. Additionally, we have several new members this fall. We warmly welcome all who join with us to inform the public about government issues and to encourage citizen participation in government. That is our purpose, and we are happy to have as new members those who support that purpose. Welcome!

As indicated in the membership procedure insert in last month's Bulletin, I have recently mailed reminders to those who have not yet paid 2008-2009 dues. If you can, please return the envelopes soon. Call me if you have any questions. (374-1643)

Our annual orientation for new and prospective members will be on November 12th this year. The event is always an enjoyable evening of conversation and information. and food too! All who have joined since last November's orientation are invited. But we need everyone's help to suggest people who might want to join our League. Please think about your friends and acquaintances who are interested in being informed about government. Discuss the League with them. Then send me their contact information so I can invite them to the November 12 informational meeting. (No one is pressured to join that night. But we obviously hope some will!) November 12 will be here sooner than we think; so I need and appreciate your help to encourage new memberships.
nicholsL@nycap.rr.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jo Dorris - Freedman,
Lorinda Kay Angers,
Kendell Spraragen,
Jenny Overeynder.

Jo, whose daughter in Boston is a League member, went to last Spring's Health Care Forum and decided to join us. She is an RN, retired from Ellis Hospital as an infection Control Practitioner. She was State Coordinator for the AAR Lobby in Albany and later served a six year term on the AARP National Policy Committee in Washington DC. She currently works at the Schenectady Free Clinic and is a member of the Board of the Animal Protection Foundation. Jo is looking forward to working on the Health Care Reform Committee. She looks forward to meeting LWV members at the new member orientation meeting in October.

Lorinda joined us as a result of receiving the LWV handbook, "Who's Who in Local Government" from a friend. She is a musician (guitar player) who has written 110 songs and is a lover of classic country and bluegrass music. She is a member of the Adirondack Blue Grass League and the Northeast Country Music Association. Her son Kendell is also a new member. Lorinda is looking forward to meeting other League members.

Jenny, a native of the Netherlands, has several friends in the League. She is a retired social worker from the University of Rochester and still remains on the faculty where she administers a grant. She teaches one course on Social Work in Health Care at the SUNY School of Social Welfare. Jenny is interested in immigration issues and looks forward to attending general meetings when she is available.

Submitted by Betsy Chase

REPORT ON RECENT MEETINGS

Submitted by Connie Young, Program Vice President

THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT

The National League voted in June to make the National Popular Vote Compact our 2008-09 study. The compact is based on Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, which gives each state legislature the right to decide how to allocate its own electoral votes. States have chosen various methods of allocation over the years, with regular changes in the nation's early decades, although today almost every state awards its electoral votes to the candidate with the most popular votes statewide.

States joining the compact will continue to award their electoral votes in their current manner until the compact has been joined by enough states to represent a controlling majority of the Electoral College (currently 270 electoral votes). After that point, all of the electoral votes of the member states would be cast for the winner of the national popular vote in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. With the national popular vote winner sure to have a decisive majority in the Electoral College, he or she would automatically win the Electoral College and therefore the presidency.

Fifty enthusiastic voters launched our NPV study by attending the luncheon in September at the Stockade Inn. If you missed the informative speech by Representative Christopher Pearson of Vermont, you may borrow a CD and educate yourself. The program will also be shown on Channel 16. For more information, or to join a listserv discussion group, go to www.lwv.org. Please think of joining the committee to prepare for the consensus meeting in April '09. Call Judy Middelkoop at 382-7616 or Connie Young at 393-7061. Learn and prepare for the consensus.

FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICE COMMITTEE

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A very interesting presentation by Joan Elliot and Julie Burgess was held at the Eddy in September. The Fair Campaign Practices process, needs, and examples of actions were explained and an invitation to join the group extended. On Wednesday, Sept 24th, Gazette had an article showing current issues brought to this group.

TAKE ME TO VOTE is ready to go if you would be willing to deliver material to an elementary school please call Connie Young at 393-7061

NEWS NOTES

Statewide Clean Energy Tour Coming Soon

As part of Energy Awareness Month, the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), Environmental Advocates of New York and other environmental and civic organizations (including the NYS LWV) are organizing a bike tour and events across New York State to raise awareness about the need to take action against global warming. The events will be held between October 17th and the 25th at locations across the state. We will let you know when they will be in our area so we can support this endeavor.

After Complaints, Postal Service Shifts Course to Provide Absentee Ballot Applications

An article by Tamar Lewin, published in the NY Times on September 26, 2008 noted that an article in a tiny weekly newspaper in Shelter Island, N.Y., the Postal Service on Friday reversed a national policy prohibiting post offices from distributing applications for absentee ballots. The ban had outraged the [League of Women Voters](#) and members of Congress.

Debate 101: How to Watch a Debate

(reprinted from the October issue of the Plattsburgh LWV Informer)

The candidates:

- * Do they answer questions directly, or do they evade them or fail to answer the specific question?
- * Do they give specifics about their stands on the issues, or do they speak in generalities? Do they support their positions and arguments with facts and figures?
- * Do they talk about their own policies and positions, or do they mostly attack their opponents?
- * Are their proposals realistic? Can they actually carry out the promises they are making?
- * Do they appear sincere, confident and relaxed?
- * Do they show how their backgrounds and experience qualify them to hold the office?
- * Are their answers consistent with their previous positions, and if not, do they explain why?
- * What image are they trying to create?
- * Do their responses appear overly rehearsed or "canned"?

Media coverage:

- * If you are watching the debate on television, are reaction shots or other techniques used to create a sense of drama or conflict?
- * Are you being influenced by comments made by reporters and commentators immediately before and after the debate?

Congratulations!

To

Long-time member and activist Helen Quirini

Given Senior of the Year Award

By the Catholic Charities of Schenectady County

At their annual dinner on October 2.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please send this membership form with your dues to Lynda Nichols, 1038 Maryland Ave. Schenectady 12308.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ email _____

Membership choices: Student \$20 Individual \$55 Family \$75

(Needs adjustments can be made.)

These yearly dues are not tax deductible.