

North Country Legislative Representatives

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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 2009 No. 7

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

Inside:

- p. 1 Dues Vote/National Voter Suspended/ Environmental Committee report
- p. 2 March 6th FFF/Calendar/Save April 21st
- p. 3 February FFF Report/Pot-Luck Report
- p. 5 Action Alert/League News
- p. 7 Carbon Offsets
- p. 8 Women in History
- p. 9 NPV Consensus Questions
- p. 10 Greetings from Florida
- p. 11 Membership Form/Legislative Representatives

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.**



Dues Increase Vote in April

Our Board has avoided raising our local dues the last 2 times that National had to raise the PMP (per member payment) to cover increasing costs. We have reached crunch time. The dues you pay do not cover our state and national PMP payments. We can no longer afford to cover the difference. Therefore the Board has reluctantly voted to raise dues \$5.00 to \$50.00 for a single membership and \$70.00 for a household. This proposal will be voted on by the membership at our annual meeting April 21st.

Environmental Committee Report

The Environmental Committee met on Feb. 19th to firm up plans for the upcoming Environmental/Global Fair to be held at Champlain Mall on April 26th from noon to 2 p.m. We will also be making plans for the April Forum presentation and working toward finding sponsors for publication of our completed recycling brochure. We had a wonderful write up in the Tues Feb. 17th Plattsburgh Press on the latter.

Invite someone to join the League of Women Voters today!

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.



National Voter Suspended

The LWVUS Board gathered this past weekend for our winter meeting. The League, like the rest of our nation, is faced with difficult economic times and at our meeting we addressed the impact of our financial situation on the work of the League. I am happy to say that although we are having to tighten our belts to accommodate a downturn in financial support and investment losses, the League is more fortunate than other nonprofit organizations. Our highly visible and very successful work during the 2008 election season resulted in fairly good receipts of revenue during two of the last three months of the fourth quarter of 2008. ---

The second hard decision we made was to suspend publication of The National Voter magazine (paper and digital) until the League's finances are healthier. Publication costs for The Voter are prohibitive in a time of budget cutbacks. The Board, the LWVUS staff and I are all committed to making lemonade out of this lemon by finding new ways to deliver information to you, our members and supporters. We will keep you informed as we move forward. Please send them your e-mail address if you have not already done so. Comments and questions can be sent to Board Member Nancy Eitrem at neitrem@speakeasy.net.

LWVNYS 53rd Biennial Convention

Plan Ahead

Syracuse, NY, the weekend of **May 15-17, 2009.** Convention theme will be "Fair, Vibrant and Strong."

Greetings from Florida



Hi Everyone,

After our program planning session, things have quieted down a little bit here. We are getting ready for our Annual Membership meeting and elections. As with many leagues, getting people to say yes to board positions is getting harder to do even though we have about 100 members. Consequently we have our president position vacant. Unless someone puts their name in at our annual meeting, it looks as if the Board of Directors will conduct all business of the organization.

Coming up is a Legislative Seminar in March which is held in Tallahassee every year. League members get updates on legislation and a chance to lobby with their representatives. We'll decide this month who will go.

As far as the economy goes, President Obama came to Fort Myers to address the concerns of residents because of the high number of foreclosures in the nearby community of Lehigh. On a more positive note, houses are selling primarily because of the bargain prices that are being offered. Many times the prices are well under 50 percent of the original cost. So if you want a good deal and have a little cash hidden, come on down and help our economy.

A lot of stores and restaurants have closed because of the economy, which is sad to see. Needless to say unemployment is almost 10%. Further cutbacks in education will have negative impacts on the public schools and universities.

Lee Memorial Hospital recently consolidated a couple of its hospitals and finished a huge addition to one of them. It is one of the best areas to go to for stroke and heart conditions. Besides having 42 emergency rooms and all private patient's rooms, it can handle any conditions that may come along including open heart surgery. Fort Myers is also known as having the shortest wait time for transplants. With all of the road accidents and shootings, I'm not surprised.

In the meantime, the sun is shining, the temperatures definitely warmer than up north and the flowers are gorgeous.

Keep your glass half full and make the most of your blessings.

Take care,
Stasia Arcarese



Black Ibis



An orchid on one of the oak trees.

continued from p. 8 "Women in History"

A member of a family of modest means, she was nonetheless accepted socially by the wealthy people who lived near Chestnut Grove Plantation where she grew up. In 1749, when she was eighteen, she married Daniel Custis, who inherited a large estate from his father. She had four children, two of whom died in infancy. Custis died in 1757.



Two years later, she married George Washington, and she and her two children moved to his plantation in Mount Vernon.

Later she moved to New York, the site of the first capital, during the year of President Washington's inauguration (1789).

When President Washington retired, he and Martha returned to Mount Vernon where he died in 1799.

She led a secluded life until her death in 1802.

(From The Book of Women's Firsts p. 472)

National Popular Vote Consensus Questions

Amending the Constitution

1. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.
 - a. Action to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.
 - b. Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
 - c. The group could not reach consensus.
2. Select one:
 - a. Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the League continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.
 - b. Despite the novelty of the use of the compact approach to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the League should support the NPV Compact as a way of achieving an important goal.
 - c. The group could not reach consensus.

Congressional Consent

3. Select one:
 - a. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is not of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan.
 - b. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtaining such consent.
 - c. The group could not reach consensus.

Enforcement

4. Select one.
 - a. The NPV Compact contains sufficient enforcement provisions to assure smooth operation of the plan.
 - b. Although it is not possible to determine whether the enforcement provisions will be sufficient to assure smooth operation of the plan, the plan should be passed anyway.

- c. Enforcement of the plan is likely to add uncertainty and bring the courts into the presidential election in ways that raise substantial concerns.
- d. The lack of adequate enforcement provisions is sufficient to conclude that the NPV is not a viable plan.
- e. The group could not reach consensus.

Uniformity

5. Select one.
 - a. The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.
 - b. The NPV Compact is more important than uniformity of voting systems because it would succeed in achieving the popular election of the President.
 - c. The group could not reach consensus.

Popular Election of the President

6. Select one.
 - a. It is more important to achieve the goal of national popular election of the President than it is to achieve the goal of abolition of the electoral college.
 - b. It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.
 - c. The group could not reach consensus.

Achievability

7. Which statements reflect the views of the group?
 - a. The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states.
Agree Disagree No Consensus
 - b. A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed.
Agree Disagree No Consensus



The Informer

League of Women Voters
of the Plattsburgh Area



March 2009

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League of Women Voters First Friday Forum

MARCH 6, 2009

12 noon

Butcher Block Restaurant

Topic: "Learn about Ovarian Cancer"

**Speaker: Judi Poust and
Earla Woodworth, Ovarian
cancer survivors**

\$12.00 Soup and Salad Bar

Restaurant Policy - No Personal Checks

**RSVP by March 4th to Myra Decker
643-2742 or mystdek7@northnet.org**

League Calendar 2008-09

March 6, 2009
April 3, 2009
April 21, 2009

First Friday Forum: "Learn About Ovarian Cancer"
First Friday Forum: "Promoting a Healthy Environment"
Annual Meeting



There will be a video followed by questions, answers and discussion. This program is presented through a grant awarded to the Foundation for Healthy Living to develop and implement a community-based ovarian cancer awareness and education campaign in the Adirondack Region.

Save This Date

Tuesday, **April 21st**

Annual Membership Dinner

Details will be in the April Informer.

February First Friday Report

by Janet Forsman



Kris Joppe Mercure

Kris Joppe Mercure, a technical coordinator for the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCB), provided significant information on the current status of our beautiful lake at the February 6th First Friday Forum. She frequently referred us to relevant data within the 2008 State of the Lake Report.

First she explained that the LCB Program partners with state and local agencies, the Province of Quebec, and local scientists. Several committees share responsibility and will contribute to the Report, which includes an ecosystem score card. Animal life, population growth, and management of farm land all put pressures on our lake.

Indications of the New York State pressures are phosphorus levels, algae growth, human health toxins, and aquatic invasive species. Long-term species include purple loosestrife, water chestnuts, eurasian water milfoil, zebra mussels, and alewives. These have been tracked for the last 90 years. Those visible to the residents of Plattsburgh area include soapsuds, scum, and frequent use of the lake for washing boats or shampooing.



Kathy Schumacher, Janet Forsman

Missisquoi has some severe problems because the lake is shallow and gets lots of phosphorus from its watershed. The need to reduce phosphorus means New York needs a plan for better lake quality management, especially near farms. There are multiple stations within the Lake Champlain Basin which are monitored regularly, especially near sewage treatment plants and open lands. Urbanized land releases four times the

amount of phosphorus of all other sources into our lake. Solutions needed are retention ponds, rain gardens, control of pet and animal waste, and reduced use of fertilizers and pesticides. Undoubtedly, time and monies will determine how soon these remedies will be made available.

Pot-Luck Membership Meeting

by Betsy Metz

Phil von Bargan, Planning Department Head for the Town of Plattsburgh, discussed “A Practitioner’s View of Land Use Planning in the Plattsburgh Area: Is Sprawl Impacting the Area?” He feels that rural planning can be more challenging than urban in designations. The Adirondack Park is one of the most restrictive due to the wilderness classification.



Phil von Bargan

Vermont requires all towns to have a plan and update it every 5 years. New York recommends that all towns have a plan, but does not require it. There is a regional component because New York state is home rule so also parochial. The Town of Plattsburgh is fortunate in having a professional planner and paid staff in the planning department - the only one north of Queensbury. In addition, the Town planning committee has members with excellent backgrounds. Most North Country communities do not have a plan. Some areas of the state are very sophisticated in planning, ex. Monroe County and Rochester.

The passage of time and changing patterns have affected the area. People coming here and the closure of the Air Force base have spurred our area’s current transitioning from mill town to the importation of other area’s ideas. The City of Plattsburgh has been the traditional center of the county. Years ago the city and town were united, larger, and

continued on p. 4

continued from p. 7 “Carbon Offsets”

*Verification. Are emissions reductions independently verified and verifiable?

*Permanence. Will the emissions reductions be permanent or might they be subject to reversal in the future (e.g., if the trees in a carbon sequestration project burn or are cut down?)

*Registration. Are the offsets serialized and tracked to reduce the possibility that they could be sold more than once?

The bulk of the report focuses on the companies that sell the offsets. It evaluates the providers’ understanding of carbon offsets and offset quality as well as the degree to which the information they offer enables consumers to make effective choices. The authors’ longer term goal is to promote greater transparency in the retail offset market.

Another helpful resource for consumers looking for guidance is the Environmental Defense Fund’s Carbon Offset Project, which identifies a small number of offset projects that meet the organization’s quality criteria.

Renewable Energy Certificates

Another way in which consumers are encouraged to “offset” their carbon emissions is to purchase Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), also known as green tags. RECs are created when a renewable energy facility generates electricity. One REC represents 1,000 kilowatt hours of renewable electricity that is added to the nation’s energy grid in place of conventional electricity generated from fossil fuels.

Buying RECs helps build a market for renewable electricity. As a general rule, however, RECs are not considered equivalent to carbon offsets because they cannot be assumed to be “additional.” This is an important consideration for consumers whose goal is to become carbon neutral. Only if the sale of RECs is a decisive factor in a company’s decision to pursue a renewable energy project can the associated RECs legitimately be used to offset carbon emissions.

An important resource for potential REC purchasers is Green-e Energy, an independent certification and verification program. Green-e certified renewable energy options meet strict consumer protection and environmental standards.

The Bottom Line

For those who are serious about reducing their carbon footprint, the primary focus must be on cutting their energy consumption. And for real impact, everyone’s goal must be effective public policy on climate change.

Online Resources for Additional Information

A Consumer’s Guide to Retail Carbon Offset Providers, Clean Air—Cool Planet, December 2006, www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/ConsumersGuideto-CarbonOffsets.pdf.

Voluntary Offsets For Air-Travel Carbon Emissions, Tufts Climate Initiative, January 2007, www.tufts.edu/tie/tci/carbonoffsets/index.htm.

Environmental Defense Fund’s Carbon Offset Project: www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=23994

Green-e Energy Web Site: www.green-e.org/gogreene.shtml

Women in History

Martha Dandridge Custis Washington was born in New Kent County, Virginia, June 2, 1731; died Mount Vernon, Virginia, May 22, 1802.

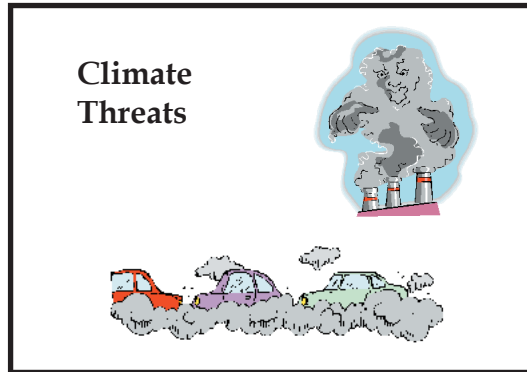
She was the first woman to have her portrait appear on U.S. paper currency (1886); first to have her portrait on a postage stamp (1902).

Washington’s portrait was on the front of a one-dollar silver certificate issued in 1886. Her image, modeled after a portrait by Gilbert Stuart, was on an eight-cent dark lilac stamp, issued in 1902.

continued on p. 10

League Calls on FEC to Follow Law in Issuing Campaign Finance Regulations

The League and coalition partners called on the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to follow the law in issuing regulations to implement campaign finance legislation. Go to lwv.org for the letter, which also points out the structural problems with the agency and that President Obama has the ability to change the nomination process for FEC commissioners to provide for a better-functioning agency.



Carbon Offsets: A Cautionary Tale

By Eleanor Revelle (LWVIL and LWVUS Climate Change Task Force)

The voluntary carbon offset market is booming. Dozens of companies are ready to help eco-conscious consumers compensate for their personal carbon emissions by contributing to projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere.

The idea sounds promising. By purchasing carbon offsets, individuals can mitigate their climate impact and help finance projects that keep greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere. In addition, as more people demonstrate their willingness to pay extra for green initiatives, they send a signal to lawmakers that there is public support for tough climate legislation. But critics consider promoting offsets to be a flawed approach. They argue that it encourages a business-as-usual attitude toward climate change by suggesting that people can neutralize their emissions without altering their lifestyle.

Compounding the problem, there are as yet no agreed-upon standards to ensure that offset projects deliver the promised carbon reductions.

Nonetheless, well-chosen offsets can be an important part of a broader strategy to address climate change. They provide an additional opportunity for individuals who have already curtailed their energy consumption to reduce their impact on global warming even further. And, fortunately, there are resources to help consumers find credible high-quality offsets.

How Much Does It Cost?

Most offset providers have online calculators that allow potential customers to calculate their emissions and the cost of offsetting that amount. However, the various calculators frequently give quite different estimates of total emissions. This reflects differences in the level of detail that users are asked to provide and in the methodology used in the calculations. Estimating the climate impacts of air travel is particularly complex.

Moreover, the offsets which are offered range widely in price, from \$5 to \$25 per ton of emissions. For consumers trying to make a choice, analysts suggest that the quality of the offset project rather than the cost should be the determining factor. It's better, they say, to invest in high quality offsets than to buy as many offsets as possible.

Choosing a High-Quality Offset

Offset providers fund a wide variety of projects, but how can consumers be sure that the offsets they buy will result in real emissions reductions? A report published by Clean Air—Cool Planet suggests a set of characteristics to look for in an offset project:

Additionality. Will the offset revenues make the project happen or would it have occurred anyway (e.g., because it is required by law)?

Baseline. Has a credible emissions baseline been determined against which reductions will be measured?

continued on p. 8

continued from p. 3 "Pot-Luck"

included Schuyler Falls. The interstate had a major impact. [The Quarry Road exit was originally planned as the gateway to the city.]

A comprehensive plan can be a tool to insure correct and beneficial development. The plan should include smart road planning, housing, lot size, land-use (also green space and wetlands), and capital improvements. A comprehensive plan is also beneficial in attracting business. However, the much needed planning process is challenged because planning is not taught in area high schools or colleges. Grass roots initiatives are typical. Rural development frequently is based on long, narrow tracts of land with housing lots shooting off a dead-end road. An engineer designs the project; landscape designers are not consulted.

Housing and public transportation with access to services needs to be expanded. The rural economy of scale is challenging and very expensive. Changing demographics including our expanding aging population are vital elements.

More recently senior housing is being built in outlying areas. However, it is narrow in scope. The development often results from the following process: government sale of tax credits, purchase by a business, and receipt by a "do good" agency. The J.C.E.O. Wallace Hill project is a classic example. Accessibility to services and the \$450,000 cost per unit are significant.

Clinton County and regional planning is directed by the following:

*Planning Board is composed of 10 people representing all the geographical areas. The Board deals with the referral process including review and public hearings.

*Legislature

*Planning Department - individual townships do not generally want County influence or control. The county has no overarching plan. The county wants to increase revenues through increased property values and assessments. There is no way for towns to talk

to each other. Towns have much freedom and opportunity, but minimal planning guidelines. The onus is on the localities. Some developers will not deal in the Town of Plattsburgh due to the planning board's regulations and review. The area is lucky in having relatively slow growth so people have time to learn.

The village of Saranac Lake and Town of Harriestown are undergoing joint planning efforts. The Peru town plan addresses the preservation of open



June Heming, Betty Ann King, Kathy Schumacher, Barbara Landes, Myra Decker, Elle Berger, Tom Metz, Madeleine Robinson, not pictured Ann Ruzow Holland

lands. The Town of Plattsburgh enforces wetland protections. The Nature Conservancy is an excellent tool for acquiring land for open spaces.

Additional facts:

*There is no analysis on the cost of development to the increase of taxes.

*Locally school tax is the major factor. However, the tax rate and service rate do not cover the cost of services.

*The three school districts in the Town of Plattsburgh dilute the town's identity.

"Sprawl constitutes low density land use patterns which are automobile dependent, energy and land consumptive and require a very high ratio of road surface to the development served." Sprawl solutions include the following:

*Citizen participation/involvement.

*Training/educating the public - for information, visit the Town website which includes a link to the

continued on p. 5

continued from p. 4 "Pot-Luck"

Comprehensive Plan or call Phil anytime. Network with other people and towns.

*Traditional neighborhood development, i.e. walking distance to services

*Form based (mixed use) zoning

*Open space preservation - locally individuals feel we have it everywhere so it is neither endangered nor a noteworthy concern.

*For conservation, subdivisions and developments need to have a landscape architect to have a successful plan.

*The Town of Plattsburgh uses a strong site plan review and has a myriad of ways to ensure certain elements are included in the planning process.

The Peru town plan addresses the preservation of open lands. The Town of Plattsburgh enforces wetland protections. The Nature Conservancy is an excellent tool for acquiring land for open spaces.

NOTE: a follow-up meeting about sprawl is planned. Please watch the Informer for details.

HOT

ACTION ALERT: Take Action on Voting Rights! The League urges support of DC voting rights legislation **S. 160** expected to reach the Senate SOON Go to: <http://capwiz.com/lwv/issues/alert/?alertid=12705456>



League News

LWVUS 2009 Legislative Priorities

The LWVUS Board announces Global Climate Change and Health Care to be the top legislative priorities for the upcoming year. Top priority issues are ones on which major congressional action is expected and on which the LWVUS will seek to be an active player. Tier two priorities are Election Reform and DC Voting Rights. Tier two issues will be acted upon if significant success is possible, though top priorities will take precedence. Tier three issues could be subject for LWVUS action only if good opportunities present themselves, and there is no pressing action on top priority and tier two issues. Tier three issues we are watching are: Campaign Finance Reform; CEDAW (the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women); Civil Liberties; Ethics; and Redistricting. The LWVUS prioritizes legislative issues for advocacy in order to focus limited resources on those issues where it is considered the League can have a meaningful impact and there is member interest and opportunity for progress.

DC Voting Rights Bill Moves Forward on Strong Bipartisan Vote - Letter sent to Senators Joe Lieberman and Susan Collins

The League of Women Voters strongly supports S. 160, the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009, and we urge the Committee to report the legislation this week. American citizens living in our nation's capital are treated uniquely – required to pay federal taxes but provided no voting representation in Congress. We strongly urge the committee to correct this injustice.

S. 160 provides voting representation in the House of Representatives for D.C. citizens by expanding the size of the House to 437 members, with the state of Utah gaining the other additional seat until reapportionment after 2010. This assures voting rights for District citizens without upsetting the

continued on p. 6

continued from p. 5 "League News"

partisan balance of the House. It also addresses the concern that Utah was not treated fairly in the 2000 reapportionment process. The legislation applies only to the House of Representatives and does not affect the composition of the Senate.

While some question the constitutional basis for S. 160, we believe that Article I, Section 8, particularly the "District Clause," provides ample authority, and that court precedents support our view. In any case, with court review expected, we ask that constitutional concerns not become a subterfuge for those who oppose providing voting representation to D.C. citizens.

Over the last 220 years, the principle that all citizens are entitled to a vote in their national government has emerged as a cornerstone of American democracy. Although relatively few Americans were entitled to vote in the early days of the Republic, virtually all restrictions on the franchise have since been eliminated, including those based on race, sex, wealth, and property ownership. Americans living in the nation's capital deserve to have voting representation in the Congress that makes their laws, taxes them and can call them to war.

Americans have espoused and fought for democracy across the globe. We urge the Committee to join that fight by reporting S. 160 to the Senate.

Sincerely,
Mary G. Wilson, President

Don't Forget to Turn Your Clocks Ahead on March 8th



Sunshine Week Event

On Friday, March 20 from 1 - 2:30 PM (ET), the LWVEF will co-host the 4th Annual Sunshine Week National Dialogue. The event, "Opening Doors: Finding the Keys to Open Government," will be held at the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC, and available via webcast. It will feature panels of experts from inside and outside government, who will discuss federal openness policies and opportunities for people to use government information to make a difference in their communities. Leagues are encouraged to host "viewing parties" in their local communities. Audience members will have opportunities to ask questions of the panelists, and Leagues could consider combining the webcast with a follow-up panel to discuss local aspects of the issue. For more information, visit www.openthegovernment.org <http://www.openthegovernment.org>.

Doing Well for Yourself While Doing Good for the League!

Make a charitable gift to the League and earn income for yourself or your beneficiaries! By making a gift of cash or securities of \$5,000 or more to the LWVEF Pooled Income Fund, you can receive an immediate income tax deduction for a portion of the gift's value, and continue earning a quarterly return on the interest earned for life. Best of all, you can name your state and/or local League, along with the LWVEF, to benefit from the residual funds when you're gone. For more information, please contact the Development office at 202-263-1355 or plannedgiving@lwv.org.

*St. Patrick's Day
March 17th*



*1st Day of Spring
March 20th*

