



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

of SCHENECTADY
COUNTY, NEW YORK

BULLETIN

January 2010

Consolidation/Shared Services Panel

January 13, Wednesday, 7-9pm at the Niskayuna Town Hall

Panelists:

John Clarkson, Professor, SUNYA

Frank Quinn, Glenville Town Supervisor (*whose term expires 1/10*)

Kyle Wilber, NYS Department of State

Municipal Management Consultant

Carl Olsen, Schenectady City Commissioner of General Services

The panelists will discuss the various options for sharing and consolidating services.

Friendly Lunch

Judicial /AT Co-Chair Helga Schroeter will review the book "[The Execution of Willie Francis: Race, Murder & the Search for Justice in the American South](#)" by Gilbert King.

"Despite no eyewitnesses and scant physical evidence, Francis was convicted and sentenced to death. After surviving the first execution attempt, he waited in prison nearly a year while the battle over his fate went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court."

At Noon on Tuesday, January 26 at the 1st Reformed Church.

Bring your own lunch. Call Connie to let her know if you are planning to attend.

Save the Date

Wednesday, February 10, 6pm.

*Potluck Planning Supper at Sonya Rubenstein's House
831 Londonderry Rd.*

President's Column

Greetings! I hope you had a joyful holiday season.

As the new year begins, we often take time personally to look at our priorities and consider what resolutions we want to make for the coming year. It is time to ask ourselves: what is our intention for the year ahead? The League is similarly reviewing and updating its action plans at all levels, and you can help with this.

Nationally the LWVUS is looking at its Advocacy Priorities for 2010. If you would like to submit suggestions, please send an email to jduffy@lww@aol.com by January 15. Indicate whether your suggestion is submitted as an individual or the result of a committee or League meeting. All suggested advocacy priority topics will be compiled into a report to the Board for consideration in late January.

At the state level, there was widespread dissatisfaction of League members with this summer's stalemate in the New York Senate. Therefore, the State Issues Committee and the Issues Specialists decided to focus the 2010 Legislative Agenda on making the State Legislature cleaner and more competitive through emphasizing campaign finance, redistricting and other good government legislative and election reforms. We will be receiving more information on this for lobbying.

At the local level, we will be holding our annual review of our local action agenda at our annual pot-luck and program planning gathering on Wednesday, February 10th at Sonia Rubenstein's home. SAVE the DATE.

Meanwhile, I hope that one of your personal resolutions is to come out for whichever League meetings you can attend. January has some excellent programs coming up. Hope to see you there!

Joanne

Gift Membership for Valentine's Day

Some members really appreciated the idea of gift bags for membership. Lynda still has a supply of the bags and the membership materials. If you know of someone who would appreciate being a League member and you wish to gift them their membership, a Valentine gift might be just the thing! Actually, Lynda can provide you with the gift materials at any time of year. But consider a February Valentine's gift for someone you know. Contact Lynda Nichols at 374-1643 or nicholsL@nycap.rr.com.

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

NUCLEAR ENERGY IN A WARMING WORLD

Submitted by Ruth Bonn, Environment Committee Chair

A standing room only crowd was not disappointed by the two speakers on “Nuclear Energy in a Warming World” at the Schenectady Public Library on November 24th. Dr. Howard Hart, a retired GE R&D materials scientist, provided an overview of current and future energy needs and sources. Dr. Peter Ford who serves on the independent Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, addressed concerns about the safety of nuclear power plants.

Starting from the premise that our fossil fuel based life style is unsustainable due to dwindling supplies of petroleum and the threat of global climate change, Dr. Hart gave an overview of energy sources and needs. At present renewable energy use is less than 8% of total energy consumed in the US. Wind, solar, geothermal and tidal combined represented just over 1% of the total with solar contributing the least. Biomass (think ethanol) is about 3.5% and hydroelectric just over 2%. Worldwide, renewable energy generation is comparable.

Reducing carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050 is a widely accepted benchmark. Given the continuing increase in energy consumption due to population growth and rising living standards in the developing world, and the general lack of political will, achieving this goal presents formidable challenges. Achieving significant reductions in the use of carbon emitting fuels will require considering all sources of power, not just one or two favorite ones. Solar and wind now contribute less than 1% of U.S. power. Practical realities mean that they cannot be counted on to be the answer for CO₂ emission reduction. Nuclear power which supplies about 9% of power in the US and 6% worldwide, is a carbon neutral source which needs to be part of the mix along with energy conservation measures and increased development of renewable sources.

Dr. Hart cited a Scientific American article that said with changes in production on the order of magnitude of those that industry took to mobilize during World War II, carbon reduction goals could be met by 2030. But the reality is that the threat of global climate change is much more diffuse, much less immediate and, therefore, difficult to focus on.

Dr. Ford who specializes in the safety of nuclear power plants and consults throughout the world, addressed nuclear energy development and safety issues. Worldwide, 444 nuclear reactors produce 17% of the world’s electricity. One hundred four reactors are in the United States and produce 9% of our electricity. In comparison, in France 76% of electricity is from nuclear power.

The safety of nuclear power plants is a major concern both of the public and of the nuclear power industry in the United States. Fears of a nuclear power plant blowing up are misplaced since they do not have the potential of exploding because of the composition of the reactor core. Even in the case of an accident such as a nuclear core melt down, the risk of radioactive release is practically non-existent. Unlike Chernobyl, U.S nuclear power plants are required to have many layers of containment. Natural and man-made sources of radiation (such as x-rays) present more danger and the risk of fatal accident from cars, falls or lightning is greater than any risk from a nuclear power plant according to Dr. Ford.

Disposal of the radioactive waste from nuclear plants is the other major concern. Spent fuel is stored and cooled on site in deep pools and after cooling in above ground dry casks. Eventual storage of spent fuel in a deep underground repository in Yucca Mountain is planned in the U.S. This plan faces opposition and concerns exist about transporting the spent fuel. Reprocessing of spent fuel was described by Dr. Ford as a way to reduce the amount of waste needing to be stored as well as providing more fuel.

The plutonium which is recovered in the reprocessing can be used to fuel reactors and the remaining, lesser amount, of waste stored. This solution is also controversial.

The conclusion of the forum was that all sources of energy should be considered including nuclear reactors. Global climate change is a serious concern. Fears about nuclear safety need to be balanced against the very real possibility, or even probability, of catastrophic effects from global warming.

Environment Committee Report Submitted by Pat Rush

League member Pat Rush represented the LWV of Schenectady County in a statewide committee led by Roberta Wiernik, the off-Board Specialist in natural resources of the State League, and several other League members to prepare a statement of response from the New York State League regarding the proposed DEC draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS) on drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale and other shale beds in the state.

Pat also represented the state League at a public hearing held by the state Senate Committee on Environmental Conservation, chaired by Senator Antone Thompson of Buffalo. At that hearing she reiterated the state League's position regarding the draft SGEIS, saying that the state League calls on the DEC to issue strict regulations, not just suggestions, to mitigate the numerous environmental impacts of gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale, to provide sufficient staff to enforce these regulations, and to consider reissuing the supplemental GEIS.

A coalition of 18 environmental and civic groups, including the New York State League of Women Voters, signed a letter to Governor Paterson and DEC Commissioner Grannis saying that the draft SGEIS was fatally flawed and should be abandoned. The letter urges the Governor to take the following actions:

- (1) Direct DEC to set aside its current draft, and commit to a 12 month moratorium on the issuance of any new permits for hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus or other shale formations in the state;
- (2) Request the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region II to convene a panel of experts on water quality to analyze proposals for hydraulic fracturing in the state and assess the potential impacts of such activities;
- (3) Direct DEC to develop a new draft environmental impact statement that contains all appropriate and legally required analyses and to propose a comprehensive rule-making package.

Among those 18 organizations signing this letter include Catskill Mountainkeeper, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Environmental Advocates of NY, National Wildlife Federation, National Resources Defense Council, NYPIRG, Riverkeeper, Inc., Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, and of course New York State League of Women Voters.

Pat Rush has taken a particular interest in the hydrofracking issue partially because of its profound impact on the Southern Tier of New York, where she lived for 12 years. She is also concerned about the type of gas drilling closer to home because the gas-rich Utica Shale underlies about half of Schenectady County, and all of Montgomery and Schoharie Counties. The Schenectady Gazette has published two Op Ed pieces by her on the topic of high-pressure horizontal slick-water drilling in shale.

Environment Committee Meeting:

Jeff Edwards, Schenectady County Solid Waste Planner will speak at the next Environment Committee Meeting. He will bring a guest from Albany County to speak about regional cooperative efforts on solid waste and recycling. The meeting will be on Monday, January 4th at the Moon and River Café on Ferry Street in the Stockade at 12 noon. Lunch may be purchased at the café. League members and guests are welcome to attend.

Judicial Committee Report

Submitted by Helga Schroeter, Judicial/AT Committee Co-Chair

The judicial committee met on Dec. 3 at Joan Elliott's house. Our guest speaker was Joe Mancini, Schenectady County Probation Department Deputy Director and Chief Administrator of the Schenectady County Center for Juvenile Justice. Mr. Mancini gave us an overview of Schenectady County's system of providing services to juveniles in the Family Court system, PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) and JD's (Juvenile Delinquents). New York State is one of only two states treating juveniles who have committed a crime in adult criminal court starting at the age of 16. PINS can stay in the Family Court system up to the age of 18. Putting 16 year olds into the adult criminal court system causes many problems, diminishing the rehabilitative efforts of the system by exposing these young people to more hardened criminals.

Mr. Mancini reported that Schenectady has a fairly well-integrated system between all the agencies playing a part in the process to help these kids in need. Many of these young people have mental health and substance abuse problems, and it is not clear how much help they are receiving to address their needs. The emphasis is on keeping kids out of institutional placement as much as possible. Generally, the policy has moved away from a punitive to a more therapeutic, rehabilitative treatment.

The committee will meet again on Thursday, Jan. 28, at 4:30 p.m. at Helga Schroeter's house (1436 Lowell Road) to develop a work plan for 2010.

Helga Schroeter and Laura Zeliger, Judicial Committee Co-Chairs

Health Committee Report

Submitted by Carol Furman

Our next committee meeting will be Monday January 11th at 9:30 am at the home of Carol Furman 1540 Keyes Ave. We will be developing a timeline and list of activities to explore current community health assessments by various organizations in Schenectady County. We will plan a program in April to share information on these assessments. We will also be discussing a new concept in long term care demonstrated in a new facility in Cohoes called The Eddy Village Green. Please join us. Call Carol Furman at 346-2746 for further information.

Observer Corps Report

Submitted by Mary Maitino

The next meeting of the Observer Corps will be on January 7, at 7:00 PM, at a place to be determined. Members will receive an email about the location. We have agreed to read pages 7-11 of the Observers Guide for discussion. Observers are needed for Niskayuna, Rotterdam, and Scotia Town Boards, as well as school districts if possible. If you are interested, please call Mary Maitino at 377- 3248, or email me, marimay67@gmail.com. Thanks for your participation.

CALENDAR of Events

Mon, Jan 4.....Environment Committee, Moon and River Café, 12 noon
Mon, Jan 4.... Working Group on Girls Steering Committee, 4pm, Library
Tues, Jan 5... LWV Board, 1400 Keyes Ave., 5-7pm
Thurs. Jan 7...Observer Corps, Place TBA, 7 pm.
Mon, Jan 11...Working Group on Girls General Meeting, YWCA, 3:30 pm.
Mon, Jan 11...Health Committee, at the home of Carol Furman, 1540 Keyes Ave. 9:30 am.
Wed, Jan 13...Consolidation/Shared Services Panel, Niskayuna Town Hall, 7-9 pm.
Fri, Jan 22.....Consolidation Study Committee, Board Room, Niskayuna Town Hall, 3:30-5:30 pm.
Thurs, Jan 28...Judicial/AT Committee, 1436 Lowell Rd, 4:30 pm.

Welcome new member,

Susanne Kimura

Submitted by Betsy Chase

Susanne is retired from, the Schenectady County Library where she worked at the Reference Desk. She used many League materials there . She has a lot of friends in the local branch. Susanne is interested in the Government Consolidation Study. As time goes on she will see what other LVW activities appeal to her.

For Your Information:

Schenectady County Legislature ...January 12, 7 pm ... 6th floor, County Office Bldg.
Schenectady City CouncilJanuary 11 & January 25, 7 pm ...City Council Chambers, City Hall.
Duanesburg Town Board...January 14, 7:30 pm....Town Hall...895-8920
Glenville Town Board...January 6 & 20, 7:30 pm...Glenville Municipal Center...688-1200
Niskayuna Town Board...Tuesday (date varies)...7 pm....Niskayuna Town Hall...386-4510.
Princeton Town Board...January 12...7pm....Princeton Hall...355-3468
Rotterdam Town Board....January 13 & 27...7 pm....Chamber Room...355-7575