

Update

The newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area



Democracy is not a spectator sport

06/07 Issue 3

Call to Annual Meeting

We have good news for all of you who have been unable to attend weekday Annual Meeting luncheons! Our Annual Meeting this year will be a Saturday morning breakfast..

We have reserved the Glimmerglass Room at the Otesaga from 8:30 - 10:30 on June 9, 2007. This should give us plenty of time to review the budget report and discuss plans for the coming year. You will still have the rest of your Saturday to do with as you please. This could include rocking on the porch of our community's treasured hotel while enjoying the best view of Otsego Lake anyone could ask for.

The price for breakfast will be \$15 inclusive. Please make your reservations by June 7th with President Ellen at 547-5646 or kuchtill@verizon.net.

Tell your League Story

The national League has opened a page on its website for members to share their League experiences with each other and with prospective members.

Your submission should address one of the following topics:

- What motivated me to join the League of Women Voters
- What being a League of Women Voters member means to me
- How my work with the League has impacted my community
- How being a member has given me skills or knowledge that

has enhanced my career or life.

Go to the League website at www.lwv.org to find the submission form. It will allow for stories of a maximum of 300 words. All of us have a story to tell, and you may be the inspiration for someone who is looking for a better connection with their community, more confidence in their understanding of public policy issues and more confidence as they go to the polls this fall.

Our Lawmakers Rejected by Board of Elections

The Winter 2007 edition of *Our Lawmakers*, our pamphlet including the names and phone numbers of elected officials in our area will not be available in the offices of the Otsego County Board of Elections.

League President, Ellen Tillapaugh resounded to this rejection by writing to the county's election commissioners, Charlotte Koniuto and Hank Nichols.

"Enclosed is the recent update of *Our Lawmakers* assembled by the League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area (LWVCA). *Our Lawmakers* was first produced by the local league in 1972, when the league was initially established. This type of voter service information is fundamental to the League and producing it that first year, was actually a necessary step for us to be chartered.

"The printing of *Our Lawmakers* is funded by local people via donations to LWV NYS Education Foundation, a non-profit, tax deductible organization. This publication is not partisan in any way, and merely provides an information service to area citizens. We

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From the President

Plan on attending the **LWVCA Annual Meeting** on Saturday, June 9, 2007. You will be rewarded with an Otesaga breakfast and conclude a year's worth of League business in one fell swoop!

Included on the agenda are:

Review and approval of the **2007-2008 Budget**
Vote on a proposed **Dues increase**. Current dues do not even cover our obligations to LWWNYS and LWWVUS. New rate structures would be \$45. for an Individual membership and \$65. for a Household membership.

Review and vote on **local positions** involving Government, Natural Resources and Social Policy.

Consideration of a **new study**. The LWWVUS Immigration Study is underway with a February 1, 2008 consensus deadline. The *National Voter* has featured this topic in the past several issues. Would members like to participate in this study?

Come prepared to make decisions and chart the focus of the LWVCA in the coming year. I look forward to seeing you on the 9th!

- Ellen Tillapaugh

printed approximately 1000 of these and they were distributed to schools, town offices, banks, businesses, organizations, etc. We receive letters from these sites, thanking us for providing this useful information.

“So you will imagine how dismayed the LWVCA is, that the Otsego County Board of Elections refused to accept any copies of *Our Lawmakers* when an individual stopped by their office to personally deliver them a few weeks ago. It is a disservice to all voting citizens of Otsego County not to have this information easily available to them.”

Run or Walk, but be There!

The League will once again participate in the annual Freihofer Walk/Run on Saturday, June 2, 2007 in downtown Albany. This even draws runners from all over the world. It will be our chance to show the world that the League is alive and well.

In addition to the opportunity to be seen, it will also provide an opportunity to see our new state League home at 62 Grand Street, just down Madison Avenue from the starting line.

We will meet at the League office at 7:30 a.m. and walk together to the starting line for the community walk from 8-9:30, cheer on our running members at 10:15, and return to the office for refreshments at our community open house from 9:30 until noon.

League t-shirts will be available below cost to all who wear them either walking, running or cheering from the sidelines.

Although there is no fee for participating in the walk, registration is required both for the walk and the run. You can register online at www.freihoferstrun.com. There you will find additional information about the event including suggestions for parking.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to enjoy the camaraderie as you join other members in showing your support for the League.

The League of Women Voters

The LWV, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

LWVUS: Mary G. Wilson, President, 1730 M St., Washington, D.C. 20036
202-429-1965 <www.lwv.org>

LWNYS: Marcia Merrins, President, 35 Maiden Lane, Albany, NY 12207 518-464-4162
<www.lwvny.org> lwvny@lwvny.org

LWVCA: Ellen Tillapaugh, President, P.O. Box 426, Cooperstown, NY 13326 547-5646

“Update” is the bulletin of the League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area. It is published as often as possible.

Would you like to join the League? Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all citizens 18 years of age. Dues are \$40 for individual membership; \$60 for a household membership; \$18.25 for Student memberships; and \$5 for Junior memberships.

For information write: LWV of the Cooperstown Area, P.O. Box 426, Cooperstown, NY 13326.

Editor: Joyce Hickling
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So Much for Budget Reform

By **Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director**

The goal of the conferencing system - begun in 1998, to end perpetually late budgets - was to start a reform process in which budget talks would be more transparent, more legislators could help craft budgets and voters could follow the process and share views with lawmakers when public input might make a difference.

Instead, the governor and legislative leaders negotiated the budget in private. Even other legislators remained in the dark until the leaders emerged to hastily report - not discuss and certainly not to debate - what back-room deals already had decided.

In the frenzied days before the April 1st deadline, leaders tasked conference committees with crafting details based on numbers too rushed to add up, directives too confusing to follow and schedules too hasty for considered judgement.

As the deadline passed, lawmakers rubber stamped 2,000 pages of budget bills, hot off the presses, before they were public. On most, there was zero debate. Disclosures required by the new budget reform law to explain the amount of money being spent were missing and, in some cases, the Legislature could not say how much it was spending.

The Governor and the Legislature must reinvent the budget process now, when pledges of reform still echo amid the groans of the budget debacle. Tell them so.

We Continue the Fight Against Death

Our state Senators must hear our voices raised against their death penalty bills, S4632 (a quick fix bill sponsored by Volker) and S00319 (a cop killer bill sponsored by Golden). Despite the fact that New York has the dubious distinction with Texas in leading the nation in wrongful convictions, these bills will bring back the death penalty in this state.

According to David Kaczynski, executive director of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty., “Most of New York’s 26 exonerations occurred years after all appeals had run out. If these innocent New Yorkers had been sentenced to death, then they would have been executed years before their innocence was demonstrated.

“As we mourn the deaths of Trooper Brinkerhoff and Officer Lindsey, we pray for some positive response to these unspeakable tragedies. Let us resolve to fight violence through effective and rational means. The futile and wasteful mixed message of capital punishment contributes nothing to making New Yorkers safer.”

National Lobbying Reforms Needed

Ethics clouds have appeared again over the U.S. House of Representatives, as criminal investigations involving two House members resulted in the Members stepping down from Committee assignments. In addition, a former House staff member pled guilty to criminal activities in connection with the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandals.

The Senate has already passed strong lobbying reform legislation, including essential disclosure provisions to require a lobbyist to inform the public about the total amount of contributions the lobbyist is providing to assist a Member or other candidate.

There is no basis for the House to adopt weaker lobbying disclosure legislation that the Senate has passed. For more information, to www.lwv.org.

HAVA Still on the Front Burner

By Aimee Allaud, LWVNY's Elections Specialist

You might think that nothing is going on with implementation of HAVA in our fair state! Not true, but events are moving at a snail's pace and that makes us all happy. Why? Because the League has always been in favor of "getting it right," before getting it done by adhering to an arbitrary deadline and potentially disenfranchising voters.

The certification process for voting machines is still in limbo. The Board of Elections, while not formally severing their contract with Ciber to be its independent testing authority, has issued a Request for Proposal for other potential independent testing agents.

No voting machines are certified to either the 2005 or 06 guidelines. Our state's Election Modernization Reform Act said that we must

have machines which meet the federal 2005 standards. Where does that leave us? In a bind! No voting machines now available meet the standards set by the federal government. This is a situation where the technology hasn't caught up with the law. So New York's slow progress toward implementation may in the long run allow us to have the most "secure, accurate, recountable and accessible" equipment

after all.

The Board of Elections is still trying to determine a standard for number of voters per machine. The tentative proposal discussed at a March meeting would allow as many as 550 registered voters per DRE, which will mean voters will endure long lines and waiting times at the polls. To read the proposal, link to the BOE website from lwny.org.

Calendar

June

- 2** **Freihofer's Walk/Run.** Meet at 7:30 at 62 Grand Street, Albany. Register at www.freihoferstrun.com. See page 2.
- 9** **Annual Meeting of the LWV Cooperstown Area.** From 8:30 - 10:30 in the Glimmerglass Room of The Otesaga. Reservations by June 7th. See page 1.



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Post Office Box 426

Cooperstown, NY 13326