



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

FEBRUARY 2007

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ANNUAL LUNCHEON MEETING SOUP AND BREAD AT NOON ON FEBRUARY 24 WOMEN'S COMMUNITY BUILDING

**LAUREN SIGNER: ITHACA CHIEF OF POLICE
"A WOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD"**

a contribution of \$3.00 is requested

LWVNY NEW POSITION ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

The League recognizes that charter schools represent an educational experiment whose efficacy has never received appropriate validation. Moreover, a review of the performance of charters in New York State indicates that, while some do an excellent job of educating children, others are less successful than the most standard traditional public schools. Therefore, The League supports public funding of academic research into the characteristics of charters that lead to student academic success.

Authority to grant, oversee, renew, and revoke charters, other than those granted in public school conversions, should be vested in a single entity. Charters should be subject to more stringent oversight of charter compliance in the

renewal/revocation of process, with greater emphasis on positive educational outcomes.

The League supports measures to limit the negative financial impact of charter schools on their home districts, including: transition assistance; home district payment to charters based on the same standard used to pay

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| LWVNY Position on Charter Schools | 1 |
| Luncheon Meeting | 2 |
| Calendar | 2 |
| Health Care Reform for US | 3 |
| ICSD School Bond Forum | 4 |
| News from LWVNY | 4 |
| 2006-2007 Membership list, LWVTC | 6 |
| Congressional Representatives | 10 |

operating aid to school districts (While the League supports enrollment as the appropriate measure, it believes the measure should be identical for both charters and traditional public schools.); separate levels of reimbursement for elementary and secondary education to charter schools based on what the home districts spend for the level of schooling provided; limitation of the percentage of a school district's budget that could be paid to charter schools. The League is opposed to State provision of capital construction and renovation services and reimbursement of capital expenditures for charter schools.

The League supports limitation of the number of charters issued in New York State. As a general matter, it believes that the number of charter schools should not be increased without prior successful implementation of the improvements outlined in this position. In lieu of amendment of the Charter School Act to increase the total number of charters that could be granted, it supports retention of the current total (100) with amendment of the Charter School Act so that a charter could be reissued if a charter school ceased to function for any reason. Any increase in the cap on charter schools should be tied to amendment of the Charter School Act so that

charters are required to prove positive educational outcomes for all children (disaggregated by special needs) exceeding those in traditional public schools as a precondition for charter renewal. To more accurately measure student outcomes in charters and to compare them to those in traditional public schools, the League supports public funding to measure educational growth in individual students as they progress from grade to grade in charter schools (a value added approach).

LUNCHEON MEETING

Our Luncheon Meeting this year is scheduled for noon on Saturday, February 24 in the Women's Community Building. Please join us for soup and bread, provided by the Board, and enjoy hearing the story of "A Woman in a Man's World," from someone who knows: Lauren Signer, Ithaca Chief of Police. Non-member guests are more than welcome!! (A donation of \$3.00 is suggested.)

LWVTC CALENDAR—SPRING 2007

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| February 24 | GENERAL LUNCHEON MEETING | Women's Community Building | noon |
| | LAUREN SIGNER: ITHACA CHIEF OF POLICE | | |
| | "A WOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD" | | |
| March 5 | Board Meeting (Old Jail) | | 7:30 |
| March 27 | GENERAL MEETING | TBA | 7:00 |
| | PAT CARBONE (tentative) from NYS Comptroller's Office: | | |
| | "HOW TO READ MUNICIPAL BUDGETS" | | |
| April 9 | Board Meeting (Kathy Burlitch) | | 7:30 |
| April 24 | ANNUAL MEETING | TBA | 7:00 |
| | JESSICA WISNESKI from Citizen Action of New York: | | |
| | "CLEAN MONEY, CLEAN ELECTIONS" | | |
| May 7 | Board Meeting (Charlotte Coffman) | | 7:30 |
| May 15 | SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION | | noon-9:00 |
| June 4 | Board Meeting (Tee-Ann Hunter) | | 7:30 |

HEALTH CARE REFORM FOR US (HCR4US)

I hope this will be the first in a series of articles about Health Care Reform. As an outgrowth of the National Convention in Minneapolis last May a group of members of the League of Women Voters (LWV) from around the US has formed. We are not a formal LWV entity but currently consist of about 300 members from individual Leagues in 46 states. We function as an independent group and do not use the League name in any of our activities. We do act in alignment with LWV policies and with the LWVUS position on Health Care.

We are composed of a **Steering Committee** that “meets” once per month via phone. This group sets policy, determines priorities, and acts as the organizing body for all the actions through HCR4US and **Supporters** who want to help the cause but don’t want to be as involved as those on the Steering Committee. Supporters get periodic e-mail related to our activities and health care. These e-mails give information, request assistance for special projects, propose ways to further advance our cause, and in general keep supporters up to date with what HCR4US is doing.

MISSION:

We embrace the 1993 LWVUS Health Care Position, which calls for “policies that promote access to a basic level of quality care at an affordable cost for all United States of America residents and strong cost control mechanisms to ensure the efficient and economical delivery of care” as well as the preference for “a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes, commonly known as the ‘single payer’ approach” as described in the 2004 -2006 Impact on Issues.

GOALS:

Our organizational goals are:

- 1.) To make Health Care Reform an issue in elections and create voter demand for universal health care
- 2.) To create an active network of League

members dedicated to promoting Health Care Reform by sharing information, expertise and useful contacts

- 3.) To prepare Leagues at the local, state and national level to BE READY TO ACT when Health Care issues become politically timely
- 4.) To promote a productive, mutually beneficial relationship between this network and LWVUS
- 5.) To develop up-to-date educational materials for the use of Leagues at the local, state and national level
- 6.) To coordinate and accomplish these tasks through a nationwide network of League members supporting Health Care Reform headed by an ongoing Steering Committee

Although LWVUS did not adopt Health Care reform as a priority at the convention we have continued to communicate with them and apprise them of our activities. We sent a letter to President Mary Wilson asking that at their January Board meeting they consider adopting Health Care Reform as a priority. In the February National Voter p.15, Health Care is listed as a lobbying priority stating that “The League agrees and believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be made available to all U.S. residents and equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care ... be part of the package.” This does not specifically state ‘Single Payer’ and we will be closely critiquing legislation and urging support for those which will get us to a publicly financed, privately delivered plan for ALL. Many of the leagues in upstate New York have a representative from their league involved, if you or a LWV member you know would like to be part of this group and receive their newsletter contact **HCR4US@yahoo.com** Or check the website at **www.hcr4us.org** for more information. If you have comments or would like to be involved locally, contact me at **healthylink@earthlink.net** Or call 272-0621.

Rebecca Elgie

SCHOOL BOND FORUM

Some of our members may be wondering why the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County withdrew its sponsorship of the February 8 informational meeting on the Ithaca City School District bond propositions. When our League was first asked to co-sponsor this meeting (with PTA Council) it seemed like a good idea. The bond propositions will be coming up for a vote on March 6 and this is an important local issue.

However, after questions arose about the appropriateness of our sponsorship, I contacted Paula Blum, the LWVNY Vice President for Voter Service. Paula explained that although a League can sponsor advocacy meetings for issues on which we have an established position, if we are going to sponsor an informational meeting, both sides of the issue must be presented.

The School Board, organizers of the meeting, initially agreed to have another opinion expressed at the forum. However, some members of the School Board were afraid that having another opinion presented might put them in the position of seeming to advocate a "yes" vote on the bond propositions which the law says they can't do, and their legal counsel was unavailable to give advice on this subject. At the last minute, the School Board asked the League to withdraw sponsorship.

Mary Berkelman

David Lee, the president of the School Board, announced our decision at the beginning of the meeting, which took place as scheduled. The panel consisted of David Lee, most of the school board members and Paul Mintz, assistant superintendent of the Ithaca City School District, who provided useful answers to the questions asked by parents, other tax payers and IHS students who attended the meeting.

Maria Eisner

NEWS FROM YOUR STATE LEAGUE Update from LWNYS, January 2007

Barbara Bartoletti Appointed to Transition Policy Development Team on Government Reform!

We are excited to report the appointment of our very own Barbara Bartoletti to the incoming Governor's transition policy development team on government reform. Barbara took that opportunity to offer testimony and expert advice to the team in the area of government reform. What an ideal opportunity for the League! After so many years of advocating for government reform we may finally see some concrete results of the hard work of many League members and friends in New York State.

The Season for Debates

We certainly had a very busy fall! The state League, under the auspices of Voter Services, set an ambitious schedule of debates. Three were successfully held, including a primary debate for Attorney General and two general election gubernatorial debates. We give special thanks to all of you who worked so very hard. The process of debate planning is complicated and necessitates careful timing and the buy in of many different people. The disconcerting reality is that after many long hours of careful planning some debates do not come to fruition. The state League will be conducting a thorough review of our policies related to debates. We welcome comments and suggestions from all local League members.

Voters Guide II

The Voters Guide II was published with a version that gave statewide candidate biographical information and candidate responses to specific questions. Additionally, regional and local versions were available in many areas of the state. Many voters let us know they found these resources helpful. In addition to the traditional hardcopy distribution of Voters Guides across the state, Voters Guide

II was offered electronically through the state League website.

We Moved!

After the UN event it was time to orchestrate the move of the state League offices from 35 Maiden Lane to our new home at 62 Grand Street. This process involved many weeks of planning and preparation. We are happy to report that the move was conducted without a single major glitch. Many people generously gave of their time to help us prepare for the move and unpack in our new offices. The staff of the state League is eternally grateful! Thank you!

Farewell to D-Net, Long Live Smart Voter

The inaugural year of the Smart Voter website was met with positive feedback from users. Smart Voter replaces D-Net, which we used a few years ago. Founded by the California League of Women Voters, Smart Voter was adapted for use in New York State. The first year of Smart Voter offered general statewide information and piloted one county, Westchester, for local polling place look-up.

Youth Development Initiative

The Youth Development Initiative, which consists of LeaderSpark and Students Inside Albany, held the first LeaderSpark 2007 training for program coordinators in Albany on September 21. The next set of trainings, geared toward program facilitators, is scheduled for January 2007, with trainings tentatively to be held in the Long Island, Capital, and western New York regions. Students Inside Albany 2007 will be held April 22 -25 in Albany at a location to be announced within the next month. Two LeaderSpark graduates per site will be offered the opportunity to attend Students Inside Albany, leaving the additional sixteen spots available to interested local Leagues. As with the 2006 Students Inside Albany conference, local Leagues will determine the process for candidate selection at the local level. Look for detailed information toward the end of January 2007.

Our 2007 Legislative Agenda

We begin the New Year with a new governor and high hopes of seeing real reform in how

New York State does business, a comprehensive health care program for all New Yorkers, the beginning of reform in our court system, and fair and adequate funding for New York's school children.

1. Reforming State Government:

- ◆ Ethics
- ◆ Campaign Finance
- ◆ Redistricting
- ◆ Lobbying
- ◆ Budget
- ◆ Public Authorities
- ◆ Legislative Procedure

2. Equity in School Financing

3. Cost Effective & Accessible Health Care

4. Court Restructuring/Judicial Selection

Copies of this Legislative Agenda, along with the Legislative Packet, will be available at the end of January. The Legislative Packet will contain background material on the issues. Plan now to make appointments to visit your state legislators and learn their positions on these issues we care so much about.

United Nations Briefings

The United Nations Briefings on Human Trafficking were very well received. The briefings were informative and included much that was alarming. The event, held at the United Nations, was filled to capacity. Following the briefings, participants could attend a luncheon in the Delegates Dining Room and take a tour of the United Nations.



LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS of TOMPKINS COUNTY**Officers**

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