



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

NOVEMBER 2007

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GENERAL MEETING ON

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN TOMPKINS COUNTY

**JOHN SPENCE, MARTHA ROBERTSON,
JOHN WARD, PAUL MAZZARELLA**

**Monday, November 26 at 7:00 PM
Beverly Livesay Room in the
Human Services Building
West Seneca St.**

(more on page 4)

every election. I know it's a lot of work, but it was well received by candidates and the public. A special thank you to Percy Browning for making a substantial donation, making it possible to publish the Voters' Guide.

We sent to the State League our recommendations for the 2008 Legislative Agenda. We focused on state government reform in order to achieve affordable housing and health care. November 14th the State League will compile recommendations from all the counties and formulate the Agenda.

The study group on immigration is well under way. The consensus meeting is scheduled for January 2008. At the Ida Trager Training

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thank you for all the energy you expended in preparing for the November 6th election. The League moderated four candidates' forums: Town of Dryden, Town and City of Ithaca and Town of Caroline. The candidates, as well as audience participants, made numerous appreciative comments about the League providing the community a valuable service. A special thank you goes to Debbie Levin, Vice President for Voter Service, for organizing these events.

I hope you saw our Voters' Guide in the Tompkins Weekly on October 29th. It was beautiful! Kudos to Tee-Ann Hunter and her son Owen for putting it together. Thank you to the many League members for distributing the paper to locations throughout the County. I hope we can provide this service to the community

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Workshop in October, we decided to participate in the state study on "Should NYS Join the Compact for a National Popular Vote?" Materials for that study will be available in December. I hope you'll participate in the study group.

It was suggested at the October Board meeting that we re-establish a committee on natural resources. The State Board position on land use and sprawl is:

In order to conserve natural resources and improve the quality of life for its residents, New York State should take a proactive role in regional land use planning, enhancing Urban neighborhoods, containing urban sprawl, and protecting agricultural land, open space, watersheds and other sensitive areas.

At our November 26th general membership meeting we are addressing the need for affordable housing. This is a real problem in our county. While many families work in Ithaca, our largest employers being the colleges, Borg-Wamer and Emerson, they can't afford to live close to their workplace. Public transportation from the towns to the city is limited, leaving it to citizens to drive the distance. With gas prices skyrocketing, this is a real strain ON families' incomes. I look forward to seeing you there for a lively discussion of this important issue.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Kay Sharp

IDA TRAGER WORKSHOP

Twenty-three women representing five local county leagues attended the Training Workshop on October 20. NYS League President, Martha Kennedy, and three Vice-Presidents, Maggie Moehringer, Betsey Swan and Marcia Merrins, presented a stimulating program. We discussed voter service activities, financial and personnel resources, utilization of technology, and membership recruitment.

Our League shared the various activities we promoted in preparation for the November 6th election. Everyone was impressed with our Voters' Guide.

While the National League did not adopt the National Popular Vote as a study topic, we in New York are going to proceed. Information for this study will be available in January 2008.

All in all, it was a good opportunity for local leagues to exchange information about their projects. Thanks to Beverly Baker for making it possible to hold the meeting at TC3.

Kay Sharp

LWVTC CALENDAR—2007-2008

(tentative items in italics)

7:00 Mon., Nov. 26	GENERAL MEETING: Affordable Housing	Human Services Building
	John Spence, Martha Robertson, John Ward, Paul Mazzerella	
9:30 Sat., Dec. 1	Board Meeting	(Maria Eisner)
11:30 Mon., Dec. 2	Immigration Study Group	Kendal
7:00 Tues., Jan. 29	GENERAL MEETING:	Women's Comm. Bldg.
	Consensus Meeting on Immigration	
Tues., Feb. 5	NYS PRIMARY DAY FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION	
Noon Sat., Feb. 16	GENERAL LUNCHEON MEETING: <i>undecided</i>	
7:00 Mar. ?	GENERAL MEETING: <i>Agribusiness and Nutrition</i>	

PROGRAM MEETINGS: YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!

Program meetings are a key element of the League's educational activities and are important for our visibility in the community. In the summer, the board approves a list of program ideas for the coming year; to become a program, an idea is further developed and focused, potential speakers are identified and contacted, and arrangements for the meeting are made. The process of developing an idea into a program is both interesting and rewarding, and it is very important that it be done well so that both our speakers and our members feel that their time has been well spent.

I would like to form a Program Committee so that more League members have input into planning our programs. I am sure that many of you have great ideas and great contacts in the community, but we need a forum for those ideas to be heard from members who are not on the board. I am also interested in exploring the possibility that some program meetings could be more participatory, using a different format than the audience/speaker model. All ideas are welcome, especially if you are willing to help make them happen! If you are at all interested in participating, please contact me (info below) and I will set up an organizational meeting, probably sometime in December.

I would also like to recruit several members willing to help with program activities over the next six months. If each member could help me with just one program, this would be a fairly modest commitment but would be a great help to me. It would require some research on the chosen topic: what are the most timely or pertinent aspects of this issue, who are the local experts? For example, the board chose immigration as the topic for the September meeting; I explored a number of different angles before choosing to focus on the role of immigrant labor in NY agriculture. It would also involve contacting potential speakers and getting commitments from them. This is easier than you might think: I have found, so far, that

people are usually grateful to have the opportunity to speak to the League and get their message out to people who are trying to influence public policy.

Whether you want to help with one program, or focus on the bigger picture, or you just want to find out more, please send me an e-mail at mth3@cornell.edu or leave me a message at 277-3025.

Thanks. Martha Hamblin

A LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

Sometime in September Nora Hardy of the Downtown Business and Professional Women called Mary and asked whether the League would like to make a presentation at one of their luncheons about local politics. We accepted the challenge and Mary Berkelman, Kathy Burlitch and Maria Eisner got together to plan a program. Together with Kay Sharp we joined about 40 business women at the Holiday Inn on October 4, 2007 for a buffet lunch. Kay introduced our small group and invited the women to attend our meetings and join the League as members. We then presented a 45-minute talk consisting of three parts. The first dealt with the suffrage movement and the history of the League (see "A History of Women in America" in this issue) by Maria. Then Kathy explained the organization of local governments in the county (using our own "Governments in Tompkins County"). Mary concluded the program by mentioning many of the current political issues in the City and Town of Ithaca, mainly the water supply issue, but also others which she had laboriously researched by making countless phone calls and checking newspapers and web sites. We hope we will gain a few new members.

Maria Eisner

VOTER SERVICES REPORT

October was a very busy month for Voter Services. Although there were no contests in either the City or Town of Ithaca, we decided that it would be worthwhile to hold a candidates' forum to let those running for office meet their constituents. On Tuesday, October 23rd, a forum was held in the Ithaca Town Hall at 7 p.m. for all the candidates running for City of Ithaca and Town of Ithaca offices. Candidates present were Carolyn Peterson, Maria Coles, Jennifer Dotson, Eric Rosario and Daniel Cogan for the City and Herbert Engman, Peter Stein and William Goodman for the Town. Svante Myrick, Joel Zumoff and Eric Levine were not present. Kay Sharp welcomed all. Diane Conneman was the moderator, Nancy Istock and Katherine Durant were the timers. Written questions were accepted. Several subjects were dealt with: affordable housing, budgets, cooperation of governments in the county, committees, immigrants, Cornell's master plan, and the SPCA. All agreed that the fact that many candidates are running unopposed is not a healthy situation. Refreshments were served. Unfortunately, the attendance was poor, in part because several other events took place around town on that same evening. (Minutes taken by Maria Eisner.)

Responding to a request from the Town of Caroline, Kay Sharp moderated a candidates' meeting at the Brooktondale Community Center on Oct. 25. Kay had also moderated a forum in Dryden (see Oct. Bulletin).

The last forum before the election was held the evening of Nov. 1 at the Ithaca Town Hall for those running for Supreme Court Justice in the 6th Judicial District. Tompkins County is one of ten counties in the 6th District. Six people were running for three positions. All six candidates and about thirty-five of the public attended. Synnova Gooding was the moderator and Deborah Levin, the timer. The Tompkins County Bar Association and the newly formed

Women's Bar Association helped with plans for this forum, and the Women's Association supplied excellent refreshments.

Thanks to the diligent work of Tee-Ann Hunter and Tim McCabe from the Tompkins County Weekly, the League distributed copies of a Voters Guide the last week of October. The Guide was an insert in the TC Weekly. In addition we were given an extra 1,000 copies to distribute. Thank you Barbara Caldwell, Barbara Thorp, Maria Eisner, Evan Williams, Jane McGonigal, Tee-Ann Hunter and Kay Sharp for distributing all those guides. A special thanks to Tee-Ann Hunter and her son for putting it all together.

Kathy Burlitch completed our participation in this fall's election with a report to the Associated Press on election night and made \$50 for our League. They were only interested in the Supreme Court race and the Land Use Issue.

Debbie Levin

MEETING ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable Housing in Tompkins County will be the topic of the Tompkins County League of Women Voters meeting on Thursday, November 26, 2007 at 7:00 P.M. in the Beverly Livesay Room at the Human Services Building on Seneca St. in Ithaca. There will be a panel discussion with John Spence from Better Housing, John Ward from the Red Cross program for the homeless, Martha Robertson from the County Legislature and Paul Mazzarella of Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services. The meeting is open to the public. (The formal address of the building is 320 W. State St. but the convenient entrance is from Seneca St.)

HEALTH CARE

Representatives from the TC Health Care Task Force, TC Workers' Center, UAW, League of Women Voters, Office for the Aging, County Legislature, Ithaca Free Clinic, Hospicare and various health-care providers and small businesses traveled to Syracuse to testify before the Task Force formed by Governor Spitzer to develop a universal health care proposal for New York State. The taskforce will study various approaches for providing health care for all New Yorkers. Governor Spitzer is expected to present a plan for universal health care for all New Yorkers in May 2008.

Many of the groups back a system that would ensure that every New Yorker has the right to receive quality health care through a publicly financed system. This system would not only lower health care costs but would be more accessible. It would be financed through taxes shared by employers and individuals based on ability to pay.

A rally and press conference was held before the hearing in conjunction with the American Cancer Society. The ACS has observed that advances in detection and treatment are of no use if people cannot access them. Therefore, ACS has placed access to health care in the forefront of their campaign to combat the number of deaths due to cancer. We would encourage all groups and agencies dealing with chronic illness disparities of our health care system to join us in this fight to gain access to health care coverage for ALL residents of our state and our country. We want to work with groups to help educate their constituents on the issues, to work with doctors and other health care providers, labor, faith communities and businesses to organize around this issue and to elect candidates who will support systemic change in the way health care is financed and delivered.

Terry Sharpe, President of UAW Local 2300, representing 1,300 mostly service and

maintenance worker states that "I know how important health insurance and health issues are. But with the rising cost it makes it even more difficult for us to ensure that all our members are adequately protected. For working and middle class families without union bargaining rights, the situation can be much worse."

The LWV Health Committee has held two meetings and has primarily focused on preparing for the hearing. Joan Bechhofer volunteered to present testimony on behalf of the TC League of Women Voters at the hearing. Five members of the committee traveled to Syracuse to be part of this hearing. We will be continuing to meet to discuss this topic and share articles and work to educate others on this topic. For information about our next meeting and to join this committee please contact Rebecca Elgie at 272-0621.

JOAN BECHHOFER'S STATEMENT

My name is Joan Bechhofer, and I am a member of the Tompkins County League of Women Voters. The League is a national nonpartisan political organization that works to increase understanding of major policy issues and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. On a statewide level, the League has sixty branches. In 1990 the National League organization undertook a two-year study on the funding and delivery of health care in the United States, resulting in the League's 1992 position statement on health care.

That statement stressed that the important values of fairness, responsibility, and access should be incorporated into health care reform. The New York State League issued its own additional position that the provision of a single payer system would be an acceptable way to contain cost and provide equitable access. Currently the Tompkins County League of Women Voters has taken up the topic of health care reform as a local study item.

What are the ingredients of an effective health care system?

- 1) Disease prevention and health promotion programs.
- 2) A comprehensive package of acute care, long term care, mental health, dental, prenatal, and reproductive health care.
- 3) Equitable distribution regardless of income, age, status, or geographic location.

What is the current scene with respect to health insurance?

According to Citizen Action of NY, more than 1 out of 3 people under the age of 65 did not have health coverage for all or part of 2002-2003. Three out of four of those people were employed. Of those without health coverage, 65% remained uncovered for 6 months or longer.

What are the medical implications of not having health insurance?

- 1) Because of lack of coverage, it is estimated that only 60% of women who should have mammograms actually get them.
- 2) The National Academy of Science Institute of Medicine states that 18,000 Americans die prematurely each year because of lack of health insurance.
- 3) According to Kaiser Family Foundation data, the uninsured are 3 times as likely to postpone medical care, fail to get needed care, skip recommended treatment, or leave prescriptions unfilled.
- 4) The poor and minorities, who represent the largest share of those without health insurance, have poorer health than those who are white and wealthy.

How does our system of health care compare to those of other industrialized countries which have a single payer system of health insurance?

- 1) Studies of the Congressional Budget Office and the GAO show that the U.S spends 50-100% more on administration of the health system. Their studies show that the single payer system would save \$100-200 billion per year. A study in the New England Journal of Medicine estimated that administrative costs take 31 cents

out of every dollar in the US health care system, as compared with 17 cents out of each health care dollar in Canada.

- 2) We spend 75% more per person on health care than Canada or France.
- 3) We are close to the bottom of the list of major industrialized countries on measures of life expectancy and infant mortality. A study by the World Health Organization of the health systems of various countries listed the U.S. as 37th.
- 4) The Commonwealth Fund study, which looked at the U.S. health system along with those of Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, ranked the U.S. last or second to last when comparing quality of care and access to it. Americans with below average income are much less likely than their counterparts in other industrialized nations to see a doctor, fill a prescription, or get needed tests and follow-up care.

The N.Y. Times on November 1, 2007, reported on a Commonwealth Fund survey of 12,000 adults in Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the U.S. 37% of American respondents, because of cost, chose not to visit a doctor when sick, skipped a recommended test, or failed to fill a Rx. This was a much higher rate than in any of the other countries in the survey. Americans reported the highest rate of lab test errors, and 2nd highest rate of medical or medication errors. The editorial was entitled "America's Lagging Health Care System," and pointed to the need for universal health coverage.

Currently, health insurance coverage through employment has many inadequacies. Employers are dropping insurance plans because they can't afford the high premiums. A survey of senior executives in Detroit found that 75% of them considered employer health insurance programs unaffordable. In 2003, the costs of manufacturing a midsize car in Canada were \$1400 less than those of manufacturing the identical car in the United States, primarily because of higher health insurance costs in this

country. Adding to the complexities of employer based insurance is the fact that the work force has so many job changes. Employees can expect to have seven different employers in their working life. It is estimated that large companies now pay 8.5% of payroll in insurance coverage for their employees. Small employers have to pay at least 25% of their payroll for health insurance. No wonder that many small employers offer no insurance plan at all. For those that do, the proposed payroll tax of 7% in a single payer system would be far less expensive.

The League of Women Voters believes that quality, affordable health care should be available to all New Yorkers. Health care policy goals should include equitable distribution of services and efficient and economical care. As a

senior citizen, I can point with pride to the Medicare system—a very successful model of how medical care can be delivered privately with a centralized system of financing. No wonder that single-payer care is often referred to as “Medicare for All.”

We urge that the single-payer system be high on the list of potential health care reform plans.

MEMBERSHIP

We are welcoming two new members

Dr. Shorna Broussard 311 E Green Street #5D
Ms. Alison Van Dyke 215 N Cayuga Street.

Thank you for joining our League.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2006-07

LWV NYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWV US website

www.lwv.org

LWV-Tompkins County

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WOMEN'S VOTING: HISTORY

From "A History of Women in America" by Carol Hymowitz and Michaela Weissman, 1978, Bantam Books

In 1846 American women petitioned the Constitutional Convention to be enfranchised, and again in 1848 they demanded the vote at the Seneca Falls Convention. But it took many more years before their dream came true.

Since many American women had been engaged in the Civil War in the 1860s, they thought that the least they deserved after the war was over was to get the vote. Not only did they feel it was their due for having helped to fight the war, it was also women's natural right. But the Fourteenth Amendment, instead, for the first time, introduced the word "male" into the Constitution and gave the vote only to "male citizens" and "male inhabitants," thereby including black men, but excluding women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote at the time "if that word 'male' be inserted now, it will take us a century at least to get it out again." She and Susan B. Anthony as well as Lucy Stone protested the Fourteenth Amendment, but without success.

At the same time the Abolitionists pointed out that the vote for black men was more important than the vote for women. Wendell Phillips wrote to Mrs. Stanton, "I am engaged in abolishing slavery, in a land where abolition of slavery means conferring or recognizing citizenship and where citizenship supposes the ballot for all men." Mrs. Stanton's reply was "Do you believe the African race is composed entirely of males?" So, the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868.

In 1869, Mrs. Anthony and Mrs. Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association, the same year that the Wyoming

territory gave its women the state vote. Women there had successfully convinced the lawmakers that they could help strengthen law and order in the territory. The new law also gave married women property rights, and equal pay for male and female teachers. Women became eligible for jury duty. Esther Morris of South Pass City became the first woman justice of the peace in the Wyoming territory. Not only were future elections more orderly, but also more honest. In 1890, when Wyoming applied for statehood, the state let Congress, which was opposed to woman suffrage, know that "we may stay out of the Union for 100 years, but we will come in with our women."

In Utah women were given the vote in the 1880s in order to forestall the federal anti-polygamy laws, but not for long. With the prohibition of polygamy woman suffrage was abolished in 1887, but reinstated again under the Utah constitution in 1896.

In 1893, women in Colorado were given the vote. People believed that women's votes would help small communities in their fight against capitalist interests in Denver, against disorderly mining camps, and against liquor and saloons. While big business and anti-suffragists paid little attention to the women's campaign, which was actually led by Carrie Chapman Catt, the small townsmen and farmers won the election and gave their women the vote

And finally in 1896 Idaho became the fourth state to enfranchise its women. It was influenced by its neighboring states. Its Populist Party voted for the presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan, and for woman suffrage. Bryan lost in the national elections, but woman suffrage was written into the Idaho state constitution.

Women in New York State gained the vote in 1917.

State Board of Elections Must Not Allow Untested DREs into New York's Polling Places

(A joint statement from the LWV-NYS and several other organizations, taken from the LWV-NYS web-site.)

Citizen advocacy organizations today announced opposition to the New York State Board of Elections proposal to allow touch screen voting machines, or DREs, in polling places in 2008. They expressed grave concerns about the Board's proposal to allow DREs to be used as accessible ballot marking devices in 2008 by disabling the device's vote counting functions and using the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) as the ballot. Recently at a meeting of the State Board of Elections and County Commissioners, Co-Executive Director Peter Kosinski stated that DREs used for this purpose would be subjected to a "truncated certification process."

The groups strongly support implementing accessible voting in all New York polling places in 2008 but are opposed to any plan that allows DREs to be used as accessible voting machines.

"The League of Women Voters of New York State supports the goal of fully accessible voting for all people, but using uncertified, untested and inaccessible equipment does not bring that goal any closer to being met," said Aimee Allaud, Elections Specialist, League of Women Voters of New York State. She added, "voting machines used by all voters should be treated equally during the NYS mandated certification process and subjected to the same performance standards for their security, accuracy and reliability."

"Citizens with disabilities just want to exercise their right to vote on an accessible, secure, and verifiable voting system—the same as all other citizens." said Cliff Perez, Systems Advocate with the Independent Living Center of the

Hudson Valley. "But voters with visual impairments cannot verify a VVPAT produced by a DRE."

"The State Board of Elections apparently is looking to sneak untested DREs into every polling site across the state in the guise of allowing them to temporarily function as "Ballot Markers"—machines that are designed to help voters mark and print out a paper ballot," said NYPIRG Legislative Counsel, Russ Haven. "Like the residents of ancient Troy, we should beware such Trojan Horses from the Board."

Other states have had endless problems with their touch screen voting machines and are rapidly abandoning multimillion dollar investments in this bankrupt technology" said Bo Lipari, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Verified Voting. "Why does the State Board of Elections want to allow these broken machines into our polling places in spite of the abundant evidence that DREs are a failed experiment?"



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