



The LOCAL VOTER
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN AREA

FEBRUARY 2008

Syracuse Metro LWV
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 Web Sites:
 Local: www.lwvsyr.org
 State: www.lwvny.org
 National: www.lwv.org

UPCOMING EVENTS
March 7th
 LWV Legislative Breakfast
April 17th
 City Counselor-At- Large
 Stephanie Miner (Details in our
 next *Local Voter*)
May 5th
 Law Day Event

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Choosing The President 2008, A Citizen's Guide to the Electoral Process published by the LWVUS Education Fund is now available in local bookstores or on line at www.lwvus.org. It is part of a proud League tradition of providing a step-by-step guide to the process by which we elect our presidents. Previous editions cover more than eleven presidential election cycles.

SYRACUSE METRO LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
2008 LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2008
8 AM - 9:30 AM - REGISTRATION 7:45 AM

STEAK & SUNDAE RESTAURANT
1830 TEALL AVENUE, SYRACUSE 13203
(JUST NORTH OF SHOP CITY)

- REDISTRICTING ?
- CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ?
- LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES ?
- COURT RESTRUCTURING ?
- COST EFFECTIVE & ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE ?
- FAIR & EQUITABLE PUBLIC EDUCATION FINANCING ?
- PROPERTY TAX REFORM ?
- NATURAL RESOURCES & THE ENVIRONMENT ?

This is your opportunity to meet and greet your state representatives and to learn their positions on the issues. The breakfast is open to te public. Join us and bring a friend.

Family Style Breakfast \$13.00 pre-paid - \$15.00 at the door

If paying by check, make payable to the Syracuse Metro LWV.

Reservation must be received by March 1st. The breakfast is optional. There is no charge to attend the program at 8:30 am.

To make your reservation:

Phone: 448-7199 - Fax: 448-7299 - E-mail: info@lwvsyr.org

Mail: PO Box 11866, Syracuse NY 13218



Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

BOARD NOTES

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Memorium

It is with regret that we announce the passing of Daune Gall. Daune and his wife Gisela have been long time members and supporters of the League. Our condolences to Gisela.

We welcome new member -

Ms. Dale Van Buren

Dale joins us on the National Level -

We're going green -

In order to reduce the use of paper as well as printing and mailing costs we can now send you the **Local Voter** electronically. Please call the office at 448-7199 or email us at info@lwvsyr.org. and we will make the change.



Naturalization Ceremonies

Volunteers are needed to register new citizens. The new citizen ceremonies are held at the Federal and State Court Houses. You will find the ceremony inspiring as new citizens from around the world are grateful to call the United States their new home. Below are dates not yet covered. Please help us out.

February 14	2pm	County Court House*
March 20	11am	Federal Building
April 24	2pm	County Court House*
May 22	2pm	County Court House*
August 21	2pm	County Court House*
September 18	2pm	County Court House*
September 25	11am	Federal Building
October 9	11am	Federal Building
October 23	2pm	County Court House*
November 6	11am	Federal Building
December 11	2pm	County Court House*

*Room 400

For more information contact **Susan Bush** at the YWCA - 424-0040.



Officers

President....	Joan Johnson
1st Vice-President	Janet Mallan
2nd Vice-President/Membership...	Mary Lou Green
3rd Vice-President/Public Relations...	Gwen Grant
Treasurer....	J. Arthur Johnson
Secretary....	Vacant

Directors

Advocacy & Issues....	Lenore Rapalski
Fund-Raising...	Elizabeth Nicoletti
Program....	Rae Rohfeld
Voter Service...	Susan Bush

Off-Board Positions

Budget Director....	Rhonda Hungerford
Nominating Committee.....	Roberta Millert, Chair
	Eleanor Feitler
	Barbara Olum
Lake Partnership....	Reginald Durant
Optical Scan Liaison....	Lenore Rapalski
Publications....	Vacant

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information please call the League office at (315) 448-7199 or e-mail to info@lwvsyr.org

Diversity Statement

The Syracuse Metropolitan League of Women Voters is committed to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, or national origin.

We look forward to reader participation and invite your questions regarding issues and columns. Kindly mail your queries to the office or e-mail to info@lwvsyr.org

Please let us know your email address.

- It is the most efficient way to communicate
 - You will be notified of upcoming local events
 - LWV National & State Action Alerts
- Your e-mail address will not be shared or sold. Please respond to info@lwvsyr.org

President's Message

The good news over the past few weeks is that New York State has moved forward in its efforts to meet the requirements of the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Under the gun of the Department of Justice, the State Board of Elections approved three paper ballot scanner systems for use in the 2008 Primary Election in order to meet the Court mandated accessibility requirements. No where to be found was a DRE (direct recording electronic) system – a victory for all advocates of a secure, accurate, recountable and accessible system.

There is a good chance that we will see these same systems in 2009 when we will no longer vote on the lever machines. Much of the HAVA funds will have been spent to meet the accessibility requirement for the 2008 September Primary.

I would like to recognize Lenore Rapalski, our Issues and Advocacy Director, and the members of our local Voter Integrity Committee for their hard work in getting the message out that only a paper ballot/optical scanner system with a ballot marking device for the disabled would ensure our votes would be cast and counted accurately. The group researched the issue for over two years and shared information with our county legislators, our county executive and his budget people, the public, and the press.

We also owe our gratitude to Aimee Allaud, LWVNYS Off –Board Specialist for Election Issues and New Yorkers for Verified Voting, under the leadership of Bo Lipari, for their relentless efforts to push our agenda. (see Bo's statement on page? of this Local Voter).

I hope you will join us for our Legislative Breakfast on March 7th. The issues are many and this is your opportunity to learn where our state leaders stand on the issues and to let them know your concerns. The success of the voting machine effort shows that with hard work and persistence we can make a difference!

Joan Johnson



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

HELP US GROW; INVITE A FRIEND

The Legislative Breakfast is one of our most interesting events. Each year we gain new members through this gathering. It's an ideal time to invite friends, neighbors, and relatives to come with you to learn about the League, enjoy the meal-time discussion, and help question the legislators. The greater our numbers, the stronger our voice and work for democracy will become.

NUMBERS COUNT

Each Feb. 1 the National LWV counts our members to determine our support for important League work at the national and state level. Our Syracuse Metro Area League count is 103 -- 60 local individual and 13 local household memberships plus 17 who have joined at the national level.

COVERING THE BUDGET GAP

Current dues for household memberships is \$65 -- \$50 for the first person and \$15 for the second. We currently pay the national and state LWV a total of \$67.20 for each household membership. The board has voted to recommend at the annual meeting that household memberships be raised to \$75 -- \$50 for the first person and \$25 for the second. This increase will cover the gap and leave a small amount to support our local activities.

Mary Lou Green, Vice-President for Membership

BREAKING NEWS

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JANUARY 25, 2008

*"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."
-Mohandas Gandhi*

I'm pleased to announce that after five years of hard work on the part of voting integrity advocates, New York State has rejected DREs and approved only the Automark and the Sequoia ImageCast scanner/marker for use in 2008 polling places. This momentous decision by the State Board of Elections virtually guarantees that New York State will vote on paper ballots and ballot scanners when it finally replaces lever machines in 2009.

Those of you who were with us at the beginning five years ago know what an enormous victory this is. When I first started traveling, presenting and advocating in New York, election officials, political parties, and machine vendors assumed that New York State was going to be a DRE state. Precinct scanners were not under discussion, and only DREs were offered by vendors. Our experience over these five years reflects the truth of Gandhi's statement - indeed we were ignored, then laughed at, then fought bitterly by the voting machine vendors and their supporters in the election establishment. But finally, truth has prevailed, and what seemed like an impossible dream in 2003 has been made real by our hard work - New York State will be a paper ballot state.

Just yesterday, it seemed like high powered lobbyists had scuttled our hopes once again as they maneuvered to keep DREs in the mix even though they were in clear violation of New York's laws. But this morning, when the Board reconvened it was immediately obvious from the commissioners opening statements that those who were pushing for the DREs had conceded defeat. No small amount of thanks is due to Commissioner Doug Kellner (D), who firmly held the line yesterday and during a long night of backroom political maneuvering, vowing he would never approve the DRE submissions which did not fulfill the requirements of New York State election law regarding accessible voting machines.

While technically it is possible for a DRE vendor to submit and win approval for the 2009 lever machine replacement, this is highly unlikely as at least half of the HAVA funds will be spent on scanner compatible ballot markers. Since all the approved systems are components of a precinct based scanner system the least expensive path, and the only sensible one, is for counties to complete their HAVA implementation with paper ballots and scanners. We've learned to never be complacent, but this time we have reason to be confident that the scanner compatible choices of today will inevitably lead to paper ballots for all New York voters tomorrow.

My deepest thanks to everyone who fought this long, difficult battle. This is only Round One, and I promise you we will have much, much more to do to guarantee that our elections belong to the public, and are transparent and observable. But for today, let's break out the champagne, relax, and celebrate this great victory. What was once only a slogan representing what we fought for has now become a reality - Paper Ballots for New York!

Congratulations friends. Together we have changed the course of New York State election history, and 12 million registered voters in the Empire State will vote on paper ballots, not DREs.

**Bo Lipari, Executive Director
New Yorkers for Verified Voting**

Lipari is a member of the League and the League's representative to the Citizen Election Modernization Advisory Committee (CEMAC)

RAFFLE TO BENEFIT THE LWV



Tickets \$5.00 each with 3 chances to win !!!

The winners will be picked March 7th at the LWV Annual Legislative Breakfast

You do not have to be present to win

- ❖ 1ST Prize- Camillus Country Club, 18 holes of golf for two
Donated by Jivi and Sue Govender
- ❖ 2nd Prize- Antonio's Restaurant, \$50 gift certificate.
Donated by Nick LaPenta
- ❖ 3rd Prize- Palace Theater, 2 Movie Packs- each pack includes: 2 movie passes & a \$5.00 snack bar gift card.
Donated by Michael Heagerty

TICKETS WILL BE MAILED TO ALL LEAGUE MEMBERS. NON-MEMBERS CAN CALL THE OFFICE AT 448-7199 OR PURCHASE TICKETS AT THE BREAKFAST.

RETURNING SOLD RAFFLE TICKETS:

- If you are returning sold tickets by mail make sure they are post marked no later than 3/1/08
- Do not send cash. Write a check to the: Syracuse Metro LWV to cover the cost of the tickets
- Please leave a message at the office 448-7199 to let us know how many you have sold & the date mailed, so that we can be on the lookout for them
- Make sure the purchaser's name, address & phone number is legible on the returned stub
- Give purchaser the corresponding stub



**PLEASE PARTICI-
PATE!**

THANK YOU !

Property Tax Relief for New Yorkers

As the 2008 Legislative session begins much has been said about the oppressive property taxes New Yorkers pay and the role they play in financing our public schools. Providing a well rounded education for our children is essential but there is growing resentment about the cost and how we pay for it. During the past four years property taxes across the state have increased by 42% according to tax reform organizations throughout the state. If we are to expand the upstate economy and encourage our young people and retirees to stay here, efforts must be made to reduce the property tax burden on low and middle income homeowners.

Governor Spitzer has proposed a cap on local property taxes by addressing spending by school districts. He has formed a commission, that includes former County Executive Nick Pirro, to study the issue. Senator DeFrancisco is sponsoring a bill that would attempt to correct the inequities of the current school aid formula. The Senate also has a plan to possibly replace school property taxes with state funding within five years. There are initiatives in the Assembly that would call for the legislature to pass a circuit breaker law. This would limit your taxes to a percentage of your income. There is also talk of expanding STAR Rebate Program.

The most reasonable option is for the legislature to pass a circuit breaker law. This would limit your school taxes to a percentage of your income. The state would pick up the rest. A simple example could look like this:

<u>Income</u>	<u>Maximum % Paid</u>
\$0 - \$50,000	3%
\$50,000 - \$100,000	4%
\$100,000 - \$200,000	5%
\$200,000 - \$250,000	6%
Over \$250,000	No limit

This concept would protect the primary homeowner and be cost effective for the state. It would eliminate the need for STAR exemptions and rebates. The billions spent on those programs may be enough for a circuit breaker.

Larry Hart, a resident of Marietta NY, is the leading Central New York advocate for a circuit breaker approach to the problem and contributed to this article.

- Financing Education - The League's Position:

We support –

1. Reforms for greater equity in education financing for both pupils and tax payers.
2. Taking education out of the political arena by adoption of a foundation approach to education finance.
3. Recognition of savings by replacement of the STAR program with a meaningful needs-based circuit breaker program with annual cost of living adjustment.
4. Stability of education finance by creation of a dedicated education reserve to make up for short-falls in times of economic downturn.
5. Raising funds to provide New York's children with a sound basic education through increases in the New York State personal income tax, implemented in a progressive fashion.
6. Opposition in principal to the use of public funds to support non-public K – 12 schools.

- Property Tax - The League's Position:

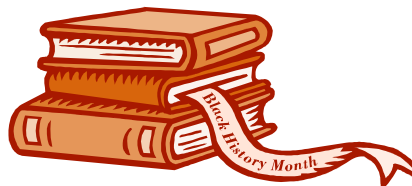
We support -

1. Support of a uniform equitable assessment and property tax system.
2. Replacement of existing residential property tax relief programs, in which relief goes to all regardless of need, with programs based on need, with annual cost of living adjustments

LWVNY
IMPACT ON ISSUES 2005 - 2007

For more information on citizen efforts to reduce the school property tax burden in New York State visit:

www.hvpropertytaxreform.org



Join the Effort to End Childhood Lead Poisoning

Dust from lead-based paint in homes is poisoning children. Lead easily crosses the blood brain barrier in young children whose normal hand-to-mouth activities causes frequent ingestion of lead particles. By impairing the development of children's nervous systems, lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, mental retardation, decreased intelligence, limited attention span, behavior problems. The brain and nerve damage cannot be reversed.

Senate Bill S6350, introduced by Rochester Republican Senator Joseph Robach, amends the public health law and "enacts the childhood lead poisoning primary prevention and safe housing act"

As the act says in its introduction:

" Lead poisoning of children persists as one of the most prevalent and preventable environmental diseases in New York....Prevention is the only effective way to protect children from irreversible damage. Unless lead poisoning is prevented, elevated blood lead levels will result in impairment of the ability to think, concentrate and learn.

The existing housing codes and enforcement systems in most jurisdictions do not include primary prevention measures for lead hazards and have proven ineffective in encouraging widespread lead-based paint hazard abatement, mitigation, and control

The financial incentives currently in place have not proven sufficient to motivate property owners to undertake widespread and effective lead-based paint hazard abatement, mitigation, and controls;.."

The bill also urges improved public awareness of lead safety issues and education of both property owners and tenants about practices that can reduce the incidence of lead poisoning.

Right now the Department of Health has concentrated on secondary prevention, which focused on intervening after a child is found to have an elevated blood level. State Comptroller Thomas DeNapoli conducted an audit of the Department of Health's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program which was released in June, 2007. In the report Mr. DeNapoli states that:

"Only by combining primary prevention with secondary intervention can childhood lead poisoning actually be eliminated...The State should make a strong commitment to accelerate progress toward eliminating childhood lead poisoning in the State... Eradication of lead poisoning would undoubtedly save millions of dollars in direct and indirect services funded by the State's taxpayers for those with elevated blood levels. Most significantly the elimination of lead poisoning would allow many children to avoid serious health conditions."

Last year the Assembly passed this legislation, sponsored by Rochester Democratic Assemblyman David Gantt and several others. It is now in the Senate Health Committee. The bill would allow property owners to get tax credits for reducing lead hazards and thus providing incentives for property owners to remove lead paint hazards in their homes.

Contact Senators DeFranciso and David Valesky now and let them know you support S6350 - ending childhood lead poisoning now.

Joan Rosenthal, LWNYS Off-Board Specialist for Lead Poisoning

CALENDAR

Friday, March 7, 2007 - 7:45 AM - 9:30 AM
Steak & Sundae Restaurant - 1830 Teall Avenue

Annual Legislative Breakfast

Wednesday, April 2, 2008
Albany NY

Gloria Steinem Day for Fair Pay

Thursday, April 17, 2008
TBA

Guest Speaker, Stephanie Miner
Syracuse City Councilor-At-Large

May 5, 2008

Law Day Event

June 13 - 17, 2008
Portland OR

LWVUS National Convention

**League of Women Voters
Membership Application**

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*Democracy is not a spectator sport
It's efficient activism
It is a way to make your voice count
It is a way to make politics a process for the people*

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Work Phone _____ E-mail _____

____ *Individual Level....\$50*

____ *Household Level*...\$65*

*Please make check payable to:
Syracuse Metro Area League of Women Voters
P O Box 11866*

____ *Student Level **....\$25*

** Two members in the same household*

*** Full time student under 25*

Syracuse, NY 13218

____ *I would like to support the League with a donation.*

For more information call us at (315) 448-7199 or visit us at www.lwvsyr.org



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
SYRACUSE METRO AREA
PO Box 11866
SYRACUSE, NY 13218**

February 2008

**Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Syracuse, NY
Permit no. 372**

**LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
MARCH 7TH - JOIN US**