



The Broome-Tioga Voter

Bulletin of the *League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties*

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“Accessing Healthcare”

Speaker: Lenore Boris

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Tuesday, January 27, 2009

7:00 Refreshments

7:30 Program

Vestal Public Library
Vestal Parkway E., Vestal, NY

Public Welcome

(The Library is accessible to people with disabilities.)

Co-President's Message

Today is the Tomorrow we worried about yesterday.

It's a funny thing about the future. Pretty soon it becomes the present; and later, the past. Remember the novel "1984", with its disturbing vision of the future? Do you remember feeling relieved, as I did, when its vision of the year 1984 did not come to pass? Some may have dismissed it as alarmist fantasy. Yet it served a purpose. It enabled us to look at trends and consider what could happen if those trends continued. People sometimes seemed to think the events of "1984" had really happened, though I doubt anyone really believed it. The book gave us a clearer vision of just why we feared those trends and helped us gather support in our work to reverse them.

It is now 25 years later: 2009, and once again we're facing an unknown future, with different issues occupying our minds. In the last decade, we've seen events that were nothing we could even imagine. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were the stuff of horror films, not of the daily news. We have seen the results of our attempts to deal with the terrorist threats and are looking for a different solution that would give us as much protection, but not at the expense of our civil rights. We've seen evidence of climate change and feel helpless to reverse it. We're faced with hard choices with regard to natural resources and the environment. We'd like to provide affordable health care to all Americans, a better education for our children, living-wage jobs for every American who is able to work, and more.

President Elect Obama has proposed major policy changes in many areas to try to correct these very problems. The League of Women Voters has an established reputation for studying issues and educating the public on the pros and cons of any proposal. We have earned a broad base of respect for our ability to present a fair and balanced study of any issue. Let us not automatically either accept or reject our new President's ideas based solely on our partisan sensibilities. Rather let us follow the League way. We can do new studies as needed, but more likely we will be able to evaluate proposed programs based on established positions, positions arrived at during the 20th century but equally applicable to the problems of the 21st century.

- Anne Taft

VOTER SERVICE

Continuing our active participation in Broome Community College's Center for Civic Engagement, Barbara Shope and Doris Lawton attended a post-election meeting of the group at the college. It was seen as a good time to assess the effectiveness of efforts to give voters opportunities to meet, listen and question those running for public office. Many venues were offered including three debates with active League of Women Voters involvement. One very successful tool - the planning grid - came up with a miracle of sorts. With all of the activity, scheduling conflicts were avoided. As Barbara noted during the meeting, the effort was very coordinated and not at all competitive.

The next election cycle was also discussed. The race for mayor of the City of Binghamton and the Village of Johnson City were seen as potentially interesting contests. It will be a year of many local posts to be won and lost. As we noted at the meeting, much of the League's efforts in 2009 will center around the new voting machines and giving as much help as we can to the Board of Elections and its' mammoth job of training the poll workers. Doug Garner, Chair of the Center, suggested that the entire group could be involved in this effort.

The next meeting of the participants in the BCC Center for Engagement will be a planning session to be held later in the Spring.

- Doris Lawton

Welcome to our newest member

CANDACE STROUD

of Vestal. We look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings. It's a great way to become acquainted with other League members and League activities.

- Eva Anderson

Identification Statement

The Broome-Tioga Voter is published 9 times a year (January, February, March, April, May, July/August, September, October, and November/December) by the League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties, 38 Oakridge Drive, Binghamton, NY 13903.

The Electoral College - A Review

Although the LWVUS has specifically adopted a position calling for the abolition of the Electoral College, a short review of the mechanics of that system of Selection of the President is helpful to an understanding of the National Popular Vote Compact.

The Electoral College is a process established by the founding fathers as a compromise between election of the President by Congress and election by popular vote. In short, the people of the United States vote for electors who then vote for the President and Vice President. Each state is entitled to a number of presidential electors equal to its total representation in the House and Senate. The District of Columbia is awarded a number of electors equal to that of the least populous state.

The founding fathers designed this constitutional plan to promote several principles they considered important. One goal was to ensure that smaller states had a role in the election of the President. Secondly, the emphasis on the power of the state as contrasted to the power of the individual voter fostered the principles of federalism which are the core of the governmental process. Finally, the use of electors rather than popular vote assuaged concerns that the electorate was not competent or knowledgeable enough to be entrusted with the direct election of important government officials, such as the President and Vice President.

The electors are selected, according to the Constitution, in the "manner" designated by the state's "legislature" (the Congress in the case of the District). At present, the "manner" chosen by every state is by popular election. Most of the states (and the District of Columbia) use a winner-take-all system, in which the candidate who receives a majority of the vote, or a plurality of the popular vote (less than 50 percent but more than any other candidate) takes all of the State's electoral votes. In Maine and Nebraska, the winner of the popular vote in each congressional district wins an elector, and the remaining two electors are chosen based on the statewide vote.

On Election Day, the voters cast their ballots for electors, even though the names of the candidates for President and Vice President are often the names shown on the ballot. Each state's electors meet forty days after Election Day, and the formal balloting for president takes place at those meetings.

Many different proposals to alter the presidential election process by amending the Constitution, including direct nation-wide election by the people, have been offered over the years. None have been passed by Congress and sent to the States for ratification. Under the most common method

for amending the Constitution, an amendment must be proposed by a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress and ratified by three-fourths of the states.

- Clare Simeone

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The Broome-Tioga Voter

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Calendar

Tuesday	January 27	Accessing Healthcare Program, Vestal Library
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Contents

Co-Presidents' Columns	2
Voter Service	2
Membership	2
Electoral College - A Review	3
National Voter - Receive It Electronically	3