



The Broome-Tioga Voter

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

www.lwv-broometioga.org

lwvmyers@stny.rr.org

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

P.O. Box 944, Vestal, NY 13851-0944

Co-Presidents

Clare Simeone 775-0035

csimeone@stny.rr.com

Anne Taft 724-6830

anci@stny.rr.com

1st Vice-Pres./Ed. Finance

Carol Oestrich 797-0026

coestrich@aol.com

2nd Vice-Pres./Program

Mary Johnson 797-3225

mjohnson23@stny.rr.com

Secretary

Joanne Gee 775-4856

raygee@echoes.net

Treasurer

Alice Brooks 754-8277

fbrooksjr@stny.rr.com

Voter Service

Doris Lawton 723-0890

dal22@verizon.net

VOTER Editor/Website Mgr.

Sue Garing 775-5041

rgrajewski@verizon.net

Tioga Liaison/Nominations

Jane Ebert 785-0323

wsebert@yahoo.com

Public Relations

Sandy Kosty 754-8051

dkosty@aol.com

Isi Trapper 723-3410

isitrap@hotmail.com

Local Government

Barbara McMann 724-8796

w.d.mcmann@att.net

Members at Large

Carole Coppens 625-4362

ccoppens@stny.rr.com

Julie Larson 669-4367

julielars@aol.com

Election Reform

Jane Park 748-4192

janepark@stny.rr.com

Shared Services and Consolidation of School Districts

Mr. Allen Buyck

District Superintendent of Broome Tioga BOCES

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

7:00 PM 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 Column

The League of Women Voters of the United States celebrates its 89th Birthday this year! It was founded by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920, during the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. It was founded just 6 months before the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, giving women the right to vote after a 72-year struggle.

The mission of the newly formed League of Women Voters was to help women carry out their new responsibilities as voters. A non-partisan organization from the beginning, they knew it was best for them to stay out of partisan politics. Members, at first novices to the world of politics, studied and learned and adopted positions on a wide variety of issues at all levels. We became a voice to be listened to, a force to be reckoned with.

Most recently, League-sponsored workshops encouraging women to run for public office was one of many forces that have led to increasing numbers of women in elective offices. Women have been elected and have served at many levels, from school board members to state legislators and governors, to congressional representatives and senators in Washington, DC. They have been appointed to serve on the Supreme Court and in the Cabinet.

As we celebrate the League's 89th Birthday, let us move forward as we study, take positions, and lobby our government based on our positions. Let us challenge ourselves personally by taking part in League activities and learning about matters that are new to us. In so doing, we will strengthen the League and strengthen our democracy. As the League gets older, it just keeps getting better!

Anne Taft

VOTER SERVICE

We had an opportunity recently to hear from the Board of Elections staff with their take on the new voting machines. They are enthusiastic, calling them an "excellent machine". The most important issue - giving the disabled an equal chance to vote - seems to have been addressed and met. Every disability is covered. The panel has brail. There is also audio. And a comfortable space for the disabled voter to sit and cast a ballot.

Concern was expressed about the cost. There are 123 polling sites and each machine costs \$11,500. Plus each paper ballot costs 65 cents. They are also working on problems such as finding the best pen for marking the ballot. At present the "Sharpie" is favored.

Mary Pine, who gave one of the presentations, encouraged use of Broome County's Internet site - Broomecounty.com - where you can check your own registration, download an absentee ballot or a sample ballot before going to the polls. Everything coming from the Board of Elections is public information except how the voter votes.

Thanks to completion last year of the New York State Voter Data Base everything is there for public scrutiny.

The Board of Elections continues to recruit poll workers for election day. If you are interested call them at 778-2172

Doris Lawton

LWVUS Legislative Priorities 2009

The LWVUS Board has announced adoption of its legislative priorities for 2009. The top two priorities are Global Climate Change and Health Care. Major congressional action is expected on these issues and the League will seek to be an active player. Second tier issues (Election Reform and DC Voting Rights) will be acted upon if significant success is possible. Tier Three issues will be acted upon if good opportunities arise and there is no pressing action on the top or second tier priorities. These include Campaign Finance Reform, CEDAW (the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women), Civil Liberties, Ethics, and Redistricting.

Anne Taft

LWVUS Suspends Publication of The National Voter

At their last Board Meeting, the LWVUS made the difficult decision to suspend publication of The National Voter. This decision was made just a few weeks after they explored the option of offering an electronic edition for those willing to receive it that was. This change was made as part of a roadmap being developed to guide the League through the nation's economic recession and into a period of recovery. While they look for new and better ways to keep the members informed, they encourage all members to subscribe to the Leaders' Update. It doesn't have the informative articles that we all enjoy in The National Voter. What it brings you is weekly updates on what's happening in the National LWV, up-to-the-minute rather than the slightly stale news that come in The National Voter.. Go to the Members section of the LWVUS website (www.lwv.org) to sign up.

National Popular Vote (NPV) – The Cons

The following is a shortened version of the arguments against NPV. Full study materials (pros, cons, consensus questions and background information) are available at:

www.LWV.org

Click on for Members (at the top)

Click on Projects and Programs (left margin)

Click on National Popular Vote Compact (on the left)

Opponents of NPV agree that there is clearly a lack of respect for the Electoral College but are concerned that NPV would only replace it with a system imperfect and ineffective in different ways from the Electoral College.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Constitutional Power: Because the U.S. Constitution gives state legislatures the power to determine how electors are chosen, there could be legal challenges to an interstate compact.

Political Compacts: A political compact tends to enlarge the political power of compacting states at the expense of either the federal government or non-conforming states. It

may function differently than other types of interstate compacts that cover subjects such as boundaries or economic issues. Political compacts are permitted between states, but all require **congressional approval**. Such approval may be difficult to obtain, and, without such approval, NPV may not be enforceable.

Non-Compacting States: Electors from non-compacting states would have little influence on selection of the President, thus greatly diminishing those states' interests.

The NPV Compact allows as few as 11 states (the largest ones) to determine a presidential election. Whether there is a broad geographic base for the Compact won't be known until we know which states enter the compact. However, it would be a dangerous precedent to allow a small number of states to have undue influence of the selection of the president.

EVALUATING FAIRNESS

State Identity and Disenfranchisement: Voters supporting the candidate who wins their state would want their state's electors to support their choice, not those of the opposing party even when that candidate is the national winner. In effect, then, the NPV Compact would disenfranchise the majority of voters in such states.

Battleground States: The majority of the U.S. population resides in concentrated urban areas. In order to gain the most popular votes, a candidate will tend to campaign primarily in areas of dense population. The concerns of many rural areas could be overlooked.

State's Rights: NPV would reduce the rights of a state itself and increase rights of individuals in all states. Each state would relinquish an independent role in the selection of the president and vice president by mandating that each state that is party to the Compact vote in a certain manner.

MECHANICAL ISSUES & POSSIBLE FLAWS

Enforcement Mechanisms/Timing Issues: Methods for enforcing the Compact, if it were broken, are unclear. E.g., it may be necessary for a state or states to bring a lawsuit against non-complying states. If a state pulls out of the compact during the "blackout period", it is unclear

what authority, if any, could force it to return or how long this might take. In addition, if a recount were necessary within a state, further delays could occur. The NPV Compact contains no authority to carry out recounts and must rely on the state's procedures. Given constitutional requirements regarding when the Electoral College casts its votes and when a president is inaugurated, situations such as this could seriously disrupt procedures of the Electoral College.

Close Elections/Plurality: Both the Electoral College and the NPV Compact allow a candidate to win with only a "plurality" of the vote. (Some proposals for direct election of the president include provisions for a minimum level of 40 %.) Under the current system, even when the presidential candidate receives less than a majority of the vote, there is at least the perceived legitimacy of a majority in the Electoral College.

Election Fraud/Voter Suppression: In the current system, fraud is generally limited to a few areas and is especially suspected in "battleground" states. Election observers and federal law enforcement can concentrate resources there. Fraud investigations at the national level, however, would be much more difficult when an election is to be decided by national popular vote totals.

OTHER ISSUES

Voting Rights Act Pre-Clearance: The Voting Rights Act requires eight states and portions of eight others (including three counties in New York) to seek approval of the U.S. Attorney General before adopting "any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard practice, or procedure with respect to voting." The VRA is often cited in state redistricting plans and might be a basis for challenging the NPV Compact if prior approval is not secured.

Faithless Electors: Opponents of NPV fear that with the NPV Compact some electors might feel an injustice would occur to their home state if they cast their vote for the national winner and thus may be tempted to violate the Compact.

LEAGUE ISSUES

Uniform Standards: LWVUS supports uniform stan-

dards for all elections. National level changes to the process that are consistent across the states would engender a better balance of issues and concerns of the body politic rather than any measure adopted on a state-by-state basis.

CONCLUDING ARGUMENTS AGAINST NPV

While the United States is a Republic and not a direct democracy, LWVUS supports abolition of the Electoral College and direct election of the president, rejecting arguments for federalism over those for individual voters' rights in this matter. The NPV Compact appears to be an imperfect system replacing a system that is also not perfect. NPV is gaining interest because of its novelty and because of public enthusiasm for eliminating the Electoral College. These are not sufficient reasons to support the NPV Compact given the potential constitutional problems. It is clear that changing the Constitution is extremely difficult; it was so designed. It is important for the League to consider whether changes in the election of the president should be accomplished through normal constitutional amendment procedures or through the "work around" proposed in the NPV Compact.

Jane Park & Clare Simeone

LWVNY Legislative Agenda

REFORMING STATE GOVERNMENT

Support ethics reform in state government. Support for public financing of statewide elections and enactment of the League's legislative proposal for campaign finance reform.

Improve election processes which extend and encourage voting, including no-excuse absentee balloting, election day registration, support for enhanced training of poll workers and adequate staffing at polling places including the use of split shifts for election workers.

Create a nonpartisan redistricting commission to draft the State Legislative and Congressional boundaries for the 2012 elections.

Support an open and accountable state budget process.

ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Support New York State legislation which would:

Reduce greenhouse emissions;

Foster energy efficiency, renewable energy, green infrastructure;

Protect water quality;

Promote smart growth through regional planning that enhances urban neighborhoods, protects agricultural land, open spaces, watersheds, and other sensitive areas;

Promote waste management, through the Bigger Better Bottle Bill;

Promote effective and expanded public transit as a strategy to reduce air pollution and conserve energy.

COST-EFFECTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

Support health care legislation that provides a basic level of quality physical and mental health care, and meets the League's criteria for equity, access, quality and cost containment.

ADDITIONAL LEAGUE POSITIONS

Additional League positions include:

Alternatives to Incarceration

Children's Issues

Court Restructuring

Domestic Violence

Equity in School Financing

Gun Control

Judicial Process

Lead Poisoning

Pay Equity

Reproductive Choices

From <http://lwvny.org/advocacy/LegAgenda.html>



The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Men and women of voting age are welcome to join.

Be Part of the Action – Join Today!

Membership Application

___ Individual membership \$55/yr.

___ Household membership \$80/yr.

___ Student membership \$25/yr.

___ Send me information about the League.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ___ Zip _____

Phone _____

Make checks payable to LWVBTC and mail with this coupon to LWVBTC, PO Box 944, Vestal, NY 13851-0944.

Identification Statement

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The Broome-Tioga Voter

The League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties
P.O. Box 944
Vestal, NY 13851-0944
(607)772-4936

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Calendar

Tuesday	March 24	Program Meeting on Shared Services and Consolidation of School Districts
Tuesday	April 28	Consensus Meeting on NPV Compact
Tuesday	May 12	Annual Meeting
Friday-Sunday	May 15-17	LWVNYS Biannual Convention

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