



# *LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY*

OCTOBER 2009

PRESIDENT: MARNIE JOHNSON 257-2948  
[www.lwvtompkins.14850.com](http://www.lwvtompkins.14850.com)

EDITOR: ROBERT SILSBEE 273-1436  
MEMBERSHIP: MARIA EISNER 277-4404

## **IN MEMORIAM BARBARA CALDWELL**

The league lost a long-time member this past summer with the death of Barbara Caldwell. A true "native Ithacan," Barbara gave back much, in many ways, to this community she loved. She served on the Town of Dryden planning committee for many years; she did much in her Ellis Hollow area in a variety of roles; and was as active as her work allowed in League activities. Most recently she served as the League board's secretary and had just begun to serve as our League's co-president. She was our dear and valued friend. We mourn her passing and will miss her very much.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

October--trees are changing color, the air is chillier, children look forward to Halloween, and the League of Women Voters plans candidates' meetings and encourages people to get out to vote on Election Day. "Become informed, then vote!" is this season's motto. Locally, the Town of Ithaca primary in September certainly showed us once again that every vote does count!

On Sept. 28th our NYS League president, Betsey Swan, visited us. She had an early dinner with our League board and described some of her vision of the state of the NYS League and possible future directions it could take. She also

asked us to individually describe what we felt were our local league's strengths and problems. It was a good positive sharing time. Then we went on to the evening's general membership meeting. (See Flo Smith's report on the content of this.) After her overnight at Libby DeProsse's we toured Ithaca a bit in the morning to acquaint her better with our community. In the course of the near year or so Betsey plans to visit all the local leagues in the state--a major undertaking! This will give her a much better understanding of what local leagues want to do, what they can do, and how we can all work together to our mutual best advantage. We're impressed and wish her well!

Marnie Johnson

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**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Our "new" Natural Resources committee will be having its first meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 20th, at 7:15 p.m. at 361 Savage Farm Drive. Our major focus now will be on the issue of gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale. You have been reading about it in the papers, perhaps talking about it with friends, etc. If you have an interest we hope to see you at this meeting. It is a new group and we will be sharing our perspectives and information. If you have questions or need directions, call me (257-2948).

Marnie Johnson, President

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT —  
CONSOLIDATION/SHARED SERVICES**

The LWV-TC will soon initiate a second study this fall in coordination with the State effort described below. Watch for details in the November bulletin. If you're interested there's plenty of material to warm up on at the website listed at the end of the following.

**State Study Gears Up**

With the advent of fall, we are gearing up for

the governmental consolidation/shared services study. Local League presidents should call the state office with the names and contact information of their study chairs.

The initial study schedule is as follows:

- Sept: Preliminary bibliography to local Leagues described below;
- Nov: Full bibliography and written materials for local Leagues;
- Dec: Consensus questions developed by committee;
- Jan: Consensus questions go out after approval by State Board;
- Jan to Apr: Local Leagues have meetings and prepare answers to consensus questions;
- Apr/May: Committee reviews input from local Leagues and prepares a draft position for State Board approval at May board meeting.

The following website contains valuable information about government consolidation/shared services:  
[www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/publications.htm#SharedServices](http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/publications.htm#SharedServices)

**LWV-TC CALENDAR—2009-2010**  
*tentative dates and programs in italics*

— —	<b>October</b>	<b>CANDIDATES' FORUMS (see Voter Services, page 3)</b>	
<b>5:30</b>	<b>Wed Oct 28</b>	<b>FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIATIONS (see page 3)</b>	
7:00	Mon Nov 2	Board Meeting	Flo Smith
— —	<b>November</b>	<b>IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES (see page 4)</b>	
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon Nov 23</b>	<b><i>GAS DRILLING IN THE MARCELLUS SHALE</i></b>	
9:00	Sat Dec 5	Board Meeting	Maria Eisner
7:00	Mon Jan 4	Board Meeting	Old Jail
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon Jan 25</b>		
7:00	Mon Feb 8	Board Meeting	Old Jail
<b>noon</b>	<b>Sat Feb 20</b>		
7:00	Mon Mar 8	Board Meeting	Old Jail
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon Mar 22</b>		
7:00	Mon Apr 5	Board Meeting	Bob Silsbee
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon Apr 26</b>		
7:00	Mon May 3	Board Meeting	
7:00	Mon June 7	Board Meeting	

## VOTER SERVICE REPORT

The League staffed voter registration tables at the Farmers' Market on two Saturdays in September, and at the Apple Festival on the weekend of September 25. About fifty people registered; many new voters and some with changes of address. Almost as important as signing people up to vote is the fact that we get to talk to many folks about the importance of voting, and about the League's activities. We also hand out League literature and encourage everyone to join.

A fine article, written by Sue Henninger, about the League's voter registration effort appeared in the September 28 - October 4 issue of the Tompkins Weekly. Henninger also described the project "Take Me to Vote," which Board member Kathleen Yen is heading in collaboration with The Tompkins County Election Commissioners.

The committee is planning two, possibly three, candidate forums. We will provide a moderator and timer for a meeting in Dryden on October 22 at the Dryden Firehouse, from 7 PM to 9PM. The Town of Caroline is planning a meeting, but details are still being worked out. A forum is being planned for Tompkins County Legislators to be held at the Ithaca Town Hall, 215 N. Tioga St. on October 29 from 7 PM to 9 PM.

Fall is always a busy time for Voter Services, and we are always looking for people to help with a variety of activities. If you would like to try your hand at moderating a candidate forum, let us know. We supply training.

Deborah Levin  
Sally Grubb  
Co-chairs, LWVTC Voter Services

### REMINDER

Fall Meeting of the City Federation of Women's Organizations, Inc. (CFWO)  
Wednesday, October 28, 2009  
5:30-7:30 p.m.

Women's Community Building  
100 West Seneca Street  
Ithaca, New York

Dinner: 5:30 – 6:00 p.m.  
Business Meeting: 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

All interested League members are encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion. You may attend the dinner and meeting or just the meeting. If you cannot attend, please share your ideas and questions with CFWO board president, Janis Graham, 273-5758, grahamj@twcny.rr.com, or LWV president, Marnie Johnson (257-2948).

Dinner Reservations Deadline: Monday, October 19, 2009

Cost: \$12.00

To make a reservation for dinner, please call Sarah Johnson at the Women's Community Building, 607-272-1247 or e-mail at womens@lightlink.com

## STATE VOTING-MACHINE TESTS

Bo Lipari, Tompkins County LWV Treasurer, also serves as the State LWV's representative on the New York State's Citizen Election Modernization Advisory Committee (CEMAC). CEMAC was created by the Legislature in 2006 to provide citizen input to the State Board of Elections on new voting systems. During the last week of September, public testing of the new voting systems was conducted in Albany. Bo attended and observed the tests, reporting daily on his blog at [www.bolipari.com](http://www.bolipari.com).

Last week's public testing is one part of a much larger set of voting machine certification testing being conducted by New York State, and as such had relatively limited goals – primarily a public demonstration of a complete end to end test run of each of two systems. The State's certification testing process is considered to be one of the most rigorous in the nation, and was strongly influenced by advocacy work done in Albany by the State LWV and the organization Bo founded, New Yorkers for Verified Voting.

Bo's daily reports from the NYS voting machine public tests as well as many photos from the week, at [www.bolipari.com](http://www.bolipari.com), will give you detailed information on the progress of the evaluation process.

Bo Lipari

## DOLLARS FOR THE LWV-TC

The LWV of Tompkins County depends on the financial support of our members to pay for the many activities we undertake during the year. Please be sure to get your dues checks sent out today, we really depend on your timely payment to make ends meet.

Bo Lipari, Treasurer

## DOLLARS FOR THE LWV-US

**Search the Web Using GoodSearch.com and Raise Funds for the League!** Earn money to support the LWV Education Fund (LWVEF) every time you search the web! Just log onto [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com), designate the "League of Women Voters Education Fund – LWVEF - (Washington, DC)" as your charity of choice, and start using GoodSearch as your primary search engine. Each time you search, a donation will automatically go to the LWVEF. GoodSearch is powered by Yahoo!, so you'll get the same high quality search results you're used to. GoodSearch is a new search engine that donates 50 percent of its advertising revenue, about a penny per search, to designated charities.

### NOVEMBER 3, 2009 GENERAL ELECTION

**October 9**, the last day for postmarked or hand-delivered registration for General Election

**October 27**, the last day for postmarked request for absentee ballot for General Election

**November 2**, last day to apply in person for absentee ballot for General Election

Last day to submit Absentee Ballot by mail (postmarked by Nov. 2; received by Nov. 10, 2009)

**November 3**, Last day to deliver Absentee Ballot in person to County Board of Elections

**November 3, General Election Day, polls open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.**

**VOTER INFORMATION:** Contact the **Tompkins County Board of Elections (607-274-5522, [www.votetompkins.com](http://www.votetompkins.com))**, or go to their office at 128 East Buffalo Street, Ithaca, NY 14850, or

The 2009 *VOTER'S GUIDE: Facts For Voters* is available to view or print from the LWV website **League of Women Voters of New York State, [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)**

**MEMBERSHIP**

We have some new members:

Ms. Nancy Black 372 Savage Farm Drive  
257-5025  
Ms. Maria Coles 502 Warren Place  
272-0106  
Ms. Debra Dibartolo P.O. Box 981,  
Trumansburg 1488 387-5075  
Ms. Linda M. Nowak 431 Beam Hill Road,  
Freeville 13068 844-4783  
Ms. Elizabeth Reed 309 Savage Farm Drive  
257-4330

A warm welcome to all of you.

Maria Eisner, Membership

**HIGHLIGHTS OF PROPOSED HEALTH PLANS****1) The House Plan - HR3200**

A timeline for the bill states that in 2010 it will provide an end to rescissions (rescinding existing health insurance policies), simpler administration, physician payment reforms, more preventive coverage in Medicare & Medicaid, increase reimbursement for primary care in Medicaid and more funding for community health centers.

In 2011 it requires plans to meet minimum medical loss ratio standards established by Sec. of HHS, begins to fill in the Donut Hole (narrows each year until 2018), and will report a

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2009-10**

LWV NYS website  
LWV US website  
LWV-Tompkins County

leave message at 273-1436

[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)  
[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)  
[lwvte@twcny.rr.com](mailto:lwvte@twcny.rr.com)  
[www.lwvtompkins.14850.com](http://www.lwvtompkins.14850.com)

**Officers**

President	Marnie Johnson	257-2948	
V.P. Co-Program	Florence Smith	273-6147	<a href="mailto:FloSmith42@aol.com">FloSmith42@aol.com</a>
V.P Co-Membership	Maria Eisner	277-4404	<a href="mailto:mle3@cornell.edu">mle3@cornell.edu</a>
Secretary	Kathleen Yen	257-8199	<a href="mailto:kyen@twcny.rr.com">kyen@twcny.rr.com</a>
Treasurer	Bo Lipari	387-9308	<a href="mailto:bolipari@nyvv.org">bolipari@nyvv.org</a>

**Directors:**

Bulletin	Robert Silsbee	273-1436	<a href="mailto:rhs1@cornell.edu">rhs1@cornell.edu</a>
Director-at-large	Libby deProsse	257-6678	<a href="mailto:deprosse@lightlink.com">deprosse@lightlink.com</a>
Publications/Public Relations	Kathy Burlitch	539-7316	<a href="mailto:klburlitch@frontiernet.net">klburlitch@frontiernet.net</a>
Web	Linda Duttweiler	277-0006	<a href="mailto:ldutt@twcny.rr.com">ldutt@twcny.rr.com</a>
Co-Voter Services	Debbie Levin	273-7746	<a href="mailto:dlevin01@twcny.rr.com">dlevin01@twcny.rr.com</a>
Co-Voter Services	Sally Grubb	257-6017	<a href="mailto:sally.grubb@gmail.com">sally.grubb@gmail.com</a>
Co-Membership	Lucia Armstrong	257-2748	<a href="mailto:larastro@twcny.rr.com">larastro@twcny.rr.com</a>

**Off-Board Members:**

Webmaster	Michael Duttweiler	277-0006	<a href="mailto:mduttweiler@twcny.rr.com">mduttweiler@twcny.rr.com</a>
Co-Program	Robin Booth	273-0570	<a href="mailto:rlmbooth@twcny.rr.com">rlmbooth@twcny.rr.com</a>
Health Care—Chair	Rebecca Elgie	272-0621	<a href="mailto:healthylink@earthlink.net">healthylink@earthlink.net</a>

recommended essential benefits package by a Health Benefits Advisory Committee

2012: Improves low-income protections in Medicare by increasing asset limits in Part D.

2013: Reforms/prohibits refusal to sell or renew policies due to health status or pre-existing health condition, limits charging higher rates due to health status or gender but premiums can vary based on age, geography and family size.

- Insurance Exchange open to individuals without coverage and small employers with fewer than 10 employees. All others, if insurance offered by employer, must take that and will not be eligible for the Exchange.

- A public option will be available in the Insurance Exchange, in competition with private insurers— on level playing field. The hope is it will offer competition and force private insurers to compete on cost and quality.

- Affordability Credits — available from 100-400% Federal Poverty level; can apply to premiums and cost sharing.

- Individual Responsibility — Mandate requires individuals to obtain acceptable health insurance or pay penalty of 2.5% of income.

- Employer Responsibility — employers required to cover workers and families - or pay penalty of 8% of payroll.

- Protects Small business — penalties based on a sliding scale, depending on annual payrolls. Tax credit for lower-wage small businesses.

- Expands Medicaid eligibility to 133% of the Federal Poverty Line.

- Provides Medicaid for 60 days for babies without proof of health coverage.

2014: Opens Exchange to individuals who can't afford employer offered care because cost of premiums absorbs more than 11 % of income.

2015: Expands Exchange — could cover larger employers.

2018: End of grace period to meet standards: employers outside the Exchange required to meet essential benefit package and minimum contribution levels.

**2) The LWVUS** has endorsed HR3200 and is lobbying for it — as you can see from the time line it is going to take a long time to implement and costs will continue to rise. The extended time-table is a major concern. Most with employer insurance will not be eligible for the Insurance Exchange and will have to remain with employers' plans for an extended time. If employers change HMO's workers may have to change doctors. The public option may not be available until 2015 and even then it isn't a sure thing; and employers aren't bound by the benefit package until 2018. This bill does not seem to meet the League principles of affordability or universality. If the public option is in the final version, it is important to watch whether it will truly be able to compete or whether it will be watered down.

**3) Baucus Plan** The Senate Finance Committee proposes is a weaker version of the above. The main differences are the absence of employer mandates and the public option. Instead it has a co-op plan. Most agree that these co-ops will be too small to be efficient and can't compete with privates. Even places that have health insurance co-ops don't recommend them on a large scale and most feel they aren't suited to providing health insurance. Mary Wilson's letter to the Senate indicates that the Senate HELP Committee bill (Kennedy, Dodd plan) provides access and coverage for most Americans presently without coverage while working to contain costs. LWVUS supports that approach, though is concerned about many of the provisions in the Senate Finance Committee plan (this was written before the most recent version but it is probably even more problematic). She states that legislation must provide effective cost controls, equitable distribution of services and allow for efficient and economical delivery of care. Offering everyone the choice of a government administered health insurance plan like Medicare that would compete with private health insurance plans will be key.

Rebecca Elgie

### BETSEY SWAN'S VISIT, SEPT. 28th

Betsey Swan, the President of LWV-NY, was in Ithaca for our first program of the year on Monday, September 28th. She was hosted overnight by Libby deProse, and met with the Board to share a meal. Later, she spoke to a larger group about her vision for the League's future and facilitated a brainstorming session with the participants.

Betsey's main point was that the League should change some of its 'old ways' of governance, structure and programming, and adjust to current realities. Since more women are working, they have less time for meetings than their mothers had. Both women and men may be unable to make long-term commitments to an organization. In Ithaca, there are many strong interest and advocacy groups which compete for people's time and energy.

Betsey talked about some strategies we could use to increase membership and interest in the League:

- \* Emphasize the unique nature of the League and its goals. Working through member participation and agreement we: are nonpartisan, encourage active and informed participation of all citizens in government, promote understanding of major public policy issues, and advocate for public policies that support LWV goals.

- \* Make use of email, web pages and telephone to communicate more efficiently and reduce the need for frequent meetings.

- \* Update the constitution and bylaws as necessary to allow changes in the governance structure and board functions.

- \* Build coalitions with like-minded groups in the community.

- \*Have fun! Use some meetings solely for social purposes.

The members responded enthusiastically to the ideas discussed. We agreed to consider implementing some of the changes in the near future.

Betsey Swan said that the State League is working on ways to help the local leagues by sharing research and information. In particular, the LWV-NY website has been reorganized to offer expanded support and information sources for local leagues and their members. Take some time and explore the site at <http://www.lwvny.org/>

We look forward to working closely with Betsey and the staff of the State League.

Florence Smith, VP-Programs

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### EXCERPTS FROM STATEMENT BY MARY WILSON, PRESIDENT, LWV-US

"The public option is the key to consumer choice and to lowering health care costs. Both are essential elements of health care reform. The Finance Committee's failure will hurt consumers and result in higher costs. How could they be so short-sighted?"

"The current health care system is endangering our economy, our health, and our national security. Congress needs to pass comprehensive health care reform and the public option is vital. It is universal coverage that will determine the humanity of our system and a public option will make that possible for Americans who cannot obtain coverage through the traditional employer-sponsored plans. ... the possibility of universal coverage is not the only advantage of the public option. We must control costs and the public option is the best chance to bring costs into line with reality. ... The public option is critical to health care reform. Congress and the President need to demonstrate real leadership and move forward, not backward, with true health care reform."

Complete text at <http://www.lwv.org> click on "press releases" under "news and events"

## YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS

## SENATORS:

Kirsten E. Gillibrand US Senate, 531 Dirksen Senate Building, Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-4451 web-site: [gillibrand.senate.gov](http://gillibrand.senate.gov)

Charles E. Schumer US Senate, 313 Hart Senate Building, Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-6542; Binghamton Office: 607-772-6792  
e-mail: [senator@schumer.senate.gov](mailto:senator@schumer.senate.gov) web-site: [schumer.senate.gov](http://schumer.senate.gov)

## REPRESENTATIVES;

Michael Arcuri 327 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515-3224  
202-225-3665; Cortland Office: 607-756-2470  
e-mail: send from web-site web-site: [arcuri.house.gov](http://arcuri.house.gov)

Maurice Hinchey 2431 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-6335; Ithaca Office: 607-273-1388; 123 S. Cayuga St. #201  
e-mail: [mhinchey@mail.house.gov](mailto:mhinchey@mail.house.gov) web-site: [www.house.gov/hinchey](http://www.house.gov/hinchey)

League of Women Voters of Tompkins County  
410 Savage Farm Drive  
Ithaca, NY 14850

Address Service Requested