



**League of Women Voters of Chemung  
County, Inc. Newsletter  
October, 2010**

LWV of Chemung Newsletter editors:  
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**I. Election Time**

**\*Our voter registration booth at the Octagon fair on Sept. 26th got a fair amount of traffic with over 200 people filling out our straw poll answering the following questions.**

1. Are more laws needed to protect the environment for hazardous gas production?  
yes: 168      no: 31
2. Do you favor a constitutional convention to reform New York State government?  
yes: 144      no: 47
3. Are more stimulus programs initiated by the Federal government needed to combat unemployment?  
yes: 132      no: 66

Many thanks to Barb Luther, Babs Dunn and several other volunteers for working at the booth and making sure it happened!

**\*Our League had a successful forum on Sept. 29th which included a debate between the NYS Assembly candidates Christopher Friend and Jim Hare. Fourteen candidates running for the Chemung Legislature also had a chance to talk about themselves and answer questions.** Some 82 people attended at EFA. Many thanks to Barb Luther, Babs Dunn and several other volunteers that made this event happen and go smoothly!

**\*The NYS LWV Voter Guide, Part II on Candidate Information is available now! Let Mary know how many you want to distribute to people and places. Call 737-6182. Let's get out the vote by distributing these guides and encouraging to vote on Tuesday, Nov. 2.**

**\*Note: Last day to postmark an absentee Ballot Application for the General Election is Oct. 26th.** Last day to deliver your absentee Ballot in person to your county board of elections is Nov. 2.

**\*The LWVUS shared their view in September about the importance of elections and voter service. To summarize:**

The League of Women Voters is focused on making democracy work through increased voter turnout, universal voter registration, the constitutionally protected right to vote for those eligible, instant runoff/proportional voting, and fair representation.

Power of the people over money and transparency of the voting process is essential in a democracy.

What does transparency in the election process mean? It means your vote is secure, accurately counted, recountable, and accessible. We need to maintain our vigilance for continued and improved transparency of the electoral process, so every vote really counts.

## II. Some Updates from Albany- NY State LWV -

**\*Use the electron voters guide, [www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org) to find individual candidate information, including their positions on important issues!**

**\*Nov. 9th is the date for an important United Nations Event the League want members from around NYS to come to.** The topic will be "Microfinance: From Struggle for Survival to Planning for the Future." Because the UN building is under renovation, the event will be held across the street in the Church Center of the United Nations (777 United Nations Plaza). A tour of the UN and reservations for lunch at the area restaurants are also available. See the NYS website for a registration form and more information. Call Mary (737-6182) or Barb Luther (734-1321) to let the Board know you plan to attend.

**\* 2011 Legislative Agenda -** The NYWLWV is recommending that the 2011 LWVNYS agenda be the same as the 2010 agenda. Specifically, focus on making the State Legislature cleaner and more competitive through emphasizing campaign finance redistricting and other good government legislative and election reforms. Last year some election reforms were passed, such as simplifying the absentee ballot.

## III. Still a Problem: Making Voting Handicap Accessible - by **\*\*Rev. Nancy Lane, Ph.D.**

I went to the board of elections on 10/4/10 to determine if the problems with the 'handicap accessible' machine that invalidated my vote in 2008 had been solved. Let me recap then outline the problems which mean tens of thousands of people will be disenfranchised and rendered voiceless in every election.

It took me several hours to vote in '08: among several issues, poll workers didn't know how to use the accessible machine and my ballot was repeatedly rejected, despite onsite help from the board of elections. A later audit of the machine revealed that my vote was never counted. Today I learned:

1. The accessible machine seldom works and is riddled with problems. My understanding is that Albany doesn't provide help or solutions either.
2. Poll workers still have little to no training on using the accessible machine. Board of election staff are concerned and will to assist voters but remain unable to make the machines worked consistently; the rejection of ballots is routine.
3. I practiced marking a regular ballot and will attempt to vote this way but 'coloring within the lines' of the tiny circle is extremely difficult. Poll workers can mark it for me,

defeating the entire purpose of the ADA (American Disabilities Act), intended to make life reasonably independent and accessible. It also denies my right to privacy and a secret ballot, which I believe is an issue of legitimate concern today.

4. Equal access doesn't begin or end with the 'accessible voting machine. The new ballots will have small circles in light grey to mark. In 2008 I was told that any ink outside the little boxes would invalidate the ballot. There are tens of thousands of people with low vision, neurological problems, strokes, arthritis, et., who don't view themselves as disabled but who have difficulty seeing or staying within the lines of thin circles. **The is a grave concern for valid elections and our democracy.**

I'm not ready or willing to use an absentee ballot until or unless I am no longer mobile or independent. It is painful, demeaning, and totally inexcusable in 2010 to put up with attitudes and barriers that hamper voting for those with disabilities. There are simply NO valid reasons for regular noting machines that work and handicap accessible machines that do not! Accessibility (ADA) has been mandated by law for twenty years.

After teaching disability studies for 25 years, along with life experience, and training to be an advocate, I cannot sit by idly or silently while Albany or beyond allow valid voting for some citizens while not insuring equal access to valid and counted votes for citizens with disabilities.

I am asking for your help and your willingness to be aware of the problems at polling places or for people you know; for your advocacy for seniors and people with any form of disability in all elections. Finally, I trust that each of you will pay close attention to every problem involving voting in our elections, for each one threatens our democracy.

**\*\*Dr. Lane lives in Chemung County.**

**IV. Sad Note: League member Jean Knight passed away on Sept. 29** after a brief but difficult illness. Send condolences to her son, the Rev. Jonathan and Mrs. Knight at 884. Middle Rd. Horseheads, NY 14845. A memorial service will be held at Saturday, Oct. 9th at the First Presbyterian Church on 2943 Westinghouse Rd. in Horseheads at 11:00am.

*Contact Barb Luther (Co- President) 734-1321 <bluther@stny.rr.com>*

*or*

*Joan Russen(Vice President) 739-9960 <Joancrussen@aol.com>  
if you'd like to get more involved or have any questions about the LWV of  
Chemung County .*

***LWV Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.***

**Diversity Policy: The LWV, in both its values and practices affirms its belief and commitments to diversity and pluralism, which means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWV on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.**