



The Broome-Tioga Voter

Bulletin of the *League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties*
www.lww-broometioga.org janepark@stny.rr.com

Volume 64, Number 4

January 2012

**League of Women Voters of
Broome & Tioga Counties**
P.O. Box 944, Vestal, NY
13851-0944

President

Jane Park 748-4192
janepark@stny.rr.com

1st Vice-Pres./Ed. Finance
Carol Oestrich 797-0026
coestrich@aol.com

*2nd Vice-Pres./Program/
Local Government*
Richard Paden 797-2535
rpaden1@stny.rr.com

Secretary

Joanne Gee 775-4856
raygee@echoes.net

Treasurer

Alice Brooks 754-8277
fbrooksjr@stny.rr.com

Health Care/Naturalization
Susan Ruff 761-7557
advocate@stic-cil.org

Membership

Eva Anderson 775-2325
daveva345@juno.com

Membership Database
Mary Diegert 785-1236
mdiegert1@stny.rr.com

Natural Resources

Mary Johnson 797-3225
mjohnson23@stny.rr.com

Public Relations/Website
Anne Kalayjian 797-1623
askalayjian@yahoo.com

Voter Service

Sara Wokan 785-6703
riskalark@yahoo.com
Margaret Goodfellow 655-1929
mgoodfel@binghamton.edu

*"Voter" Editor and
Submissions*

Sue Garing 775-5041
sgaring@verizon.net

SOLAR ENERGY IN

BROOME AND TIOGA COUNTIES?

FANTASY OR REALITY?

COME HEAR THE EXPERTS

WHERE: Vestal Public Library,
Vestal Parkway E., Vestal, NY

WHEN: January 24, 2012 (Feb. 28 – Snow date)

TIME: 6:30-6:45 PM Refreshments

6:45 - 9:00 PM Speakers and Panel

SPEAKERS:

Dr. Roger Westgate, Dean Watson School of Engineering, Board President of The Center of Technology and Innovation, Inc., Director of the Center for Autonomous Solar Power

Dr. Gay Canough, Physicist, President and Owner of ETM SolarWorks, Endicott, NY

Edward Gunn, owner of SunMaxx Solar, Broome Industrial Park, Conklin, NY

Gary Doupe, Residential owner of a Solar Panel System, Bainbridge, NY

Public Welcome

President's Message

Happy New Year! I hope you and yours had a wonderful holiday season. Whether you're a snowbird or a stay-up-north person, I also hope you are having a healthy and comfortable winter.

Your League wrapped up its very tumultuous fall season. As you will see in this issue, despite the weather-related schedule disruptions, we completed our part of the consensus process for the study on the role of federal government in education. On November 29th, the Board approved the committee's report and met the December 1st deadline for reporting to LWVUS with hours to spare. You will also see that our Voter Service team did a masterful job with the candidate forum and the launch of 411. The Annual Brunch was as delightful as ever, and our speaker, Albert Kukul, gave us some new and helpful insights into the issues that gas leases can raise about mortgages.

While we can hope that the weather causes no further disruption, we can be sure that the political and social climate in 2012 will be tumultuous. We need to be doing all we can to bring the "civil" into civil discourse and to get out the vote. (We have virtually nowhere to go but up after the 39% turnout for the 2011 elections.)

In order to optimize our League's impact, the Board will soon begin a strategic planning process and take a hard look at our strengths and limitations as an organization and our options for the future. We will include opportunities for you to join in this process, and we hope you will. Stay tuned.

In the meantime, as you make your plans for the New Year, please consider what you might be able to do for the League of Women Voters and/or what you think the League should be doing. We have opportunities for involvement that would be a good fit for the time and talents you are willing to offer. I'd be very glad to talk with you any time about your concerns and interests. I hope to hear from you.

~ Jane Park

LWVNYS 2012 Legislative Agenda

Based on the responses we had from local leagues with suggestions for the 2012 legislative agenda, and consideration of both resources and legislative opportunities for the next year, the Board adopted the following as the League's 2012 Legislative Agenda.

Steps To A Better New York

Election Reform

Improve election processes to extend, encourage, and protect voting, including paperless and Election Day registration, better ballot design, improved polling place management/poll worker training, and measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots.

Campaign Finance Reform

Support lower contribution limits, increased disclosure and public financing. Support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Other Government Positions

Support structural reform to legislative redistricting. Support effective ethics enforcement and open and transparent government processes. Monitor impact of the property tax cap on localities and schools.

Health Care

Support affordable and effective health care for all New Yorkers.

Natural Resources

Support protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest.

Other League Positions

The League also has positions on the Judiciary, State Finances, and Social Policy under which we can and do take action.

~ Jane Park

Our Position on the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education

Eighteen members met on November 15th to come to consensus for this national issue. Results were approved by the Board on November 29th, as our input for the National League's position.

General Questions

We believe that the current role is too small due to the need to equalize education nationwide, to assist in the area of special needs children, to overcome state by state gaps in funding and programs, and to address the mobile society. The role of the federal government in public education should be in the following order: to ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education, to mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12, to monitor state efforts for funding, to develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress, and to measure teacher effectiveness through test data. It was strongly agreed that quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.

Common Core Standards

The following programs should have standards mandated by the states in order to obtain federal funding: special grant programs such as Race to the Top, all programs under Elementary and Secondary Education Act where the needs qualify for funding, and all programs receiving federal funding from any source. States can exceed the federal standards. If a state accepts the federal funds, it accepts their regulations. There should be a national assessment aligned with the common core standards that should be mandated if fully funded. We need to know what the assessments are, how they will work, and how they will be used. National standards should lead to a suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum. There is a need in this mobile society to monitor students and track their skills' development as they move among states.

The role the national assessment consortia should play in student evaluation should be in the following order: provide an assessment system that is aligned to the Common Core Standards, provide diagnostic information on each child, provide information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement, provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards, and provide criteria for determining readiness for college and careers. If we have a national assessment, data should be "criterion referenced" and clearly informative so that teachers, parents, and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level. Information from nationally required assessment data should be used to inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs. There is a concern about rewarding high performing districts to the detriment of high needs (poor performing) districts. The higher the emphasis on tests and resulting rewards, the higher the chance of cheating on grading.

Funding and Equity

In the past most of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding has been non-competitive based on need. Competitive grants are now being proposed to states/districts who meet certain federal requirements, such as Race to the Top. We felt that there should be non-competitive funding for all applicants meeting requirements. Once a program is initiated with federal funding and it proves to be successful, it needs stable and continuing financial support. There was a comment that there should be room for competitive grants for unique programs/projects that would apply to a limited number of districts. If the federal government's role is the concern of the "common good" then mandates and funding should both be provided.

Equity in public education means equitable access to high quality teaching/learning, adequate and current learning materials, clean and well maintained physical facilities, food and health care, safe and secure neighborhoods, and secure housing in that order. If students don't have the last three above, they won't be able to respond appropriately to the first

three. Schools have become societal centers. We should provide “safe and secure” schools and support outreach programs to communities and parents to assist in providing safe and secure neighborhoods. We agreed that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs. It isn’t known how successful Special Education funding can be due to the fact that it has never been fully funded. There also needs to be more flexibility in how the funding may be spent at the local level. We strongly agreed that the federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5, for all children. We also strongly agreed that Federal support for early childhood education programs (e.g. Head Start, Title I, Special Education, Early Start) should include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed and should be extended for all children.

Our committee thanks Susan Ruff and Dick Paden for providing a location so that we could have the community program, the consensus meeting, and the Board meeting.

~ Carol Oestrich

STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY UPDATE

On November 29th, 14 packets of information and application forms for the Students Inside Albany Conference were distributed to local high schools in Broome and Tioga Counties and to two High School Church Youth Groups.

The LWVNYS has provided samples of the necessary letters and forms for the teacher, counselor or group leader, and for the student who is applying to be selected. Also included were NYS League prepared fliers and brochures with the necessary information concerning the details of the Conference.

All application forms are due January 10th and the selected student will be informed on February 1st. The Conference will take place on March 25-27.

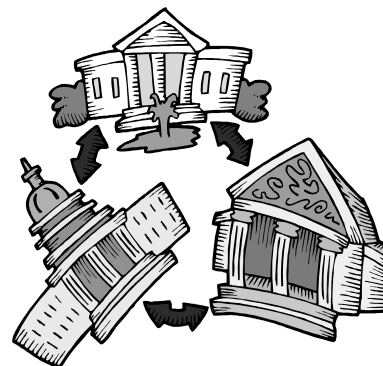
Students from over 50 local Leagues throughout New York State will have the opportunity to:

- Tour the NYS Capital
- Shadow their legislator
- Meet students from throughout NYS
- Increase their knowledge of NYS Government and
- Learn what role they can play in the process.

We, the members of the LWV of Broome and Tioga Counties, are particularly proud of this event because one of our members, Elsie Wager, past LWVNYS President

originated the concept of helping future voters become informed voters and made this experience possible with no cost to the students. The LWVNYS Education Fund along with help from NYSUT, CSEA, and Price Chopper’s Golub Foundation have kept this tradition going for close to 10 years. Thanks to Anne Kalayjian’s public relations efforts, I have received a call from a student from Vestal High School, and a guidance counselor from Windsor who read the article about the Conference in the *Press and Sun Bulletin* and have requested information about it. I look forward to more interested prospects.

~ Clare Simeone, SIA Coordinator



Voter Service Report

Debate

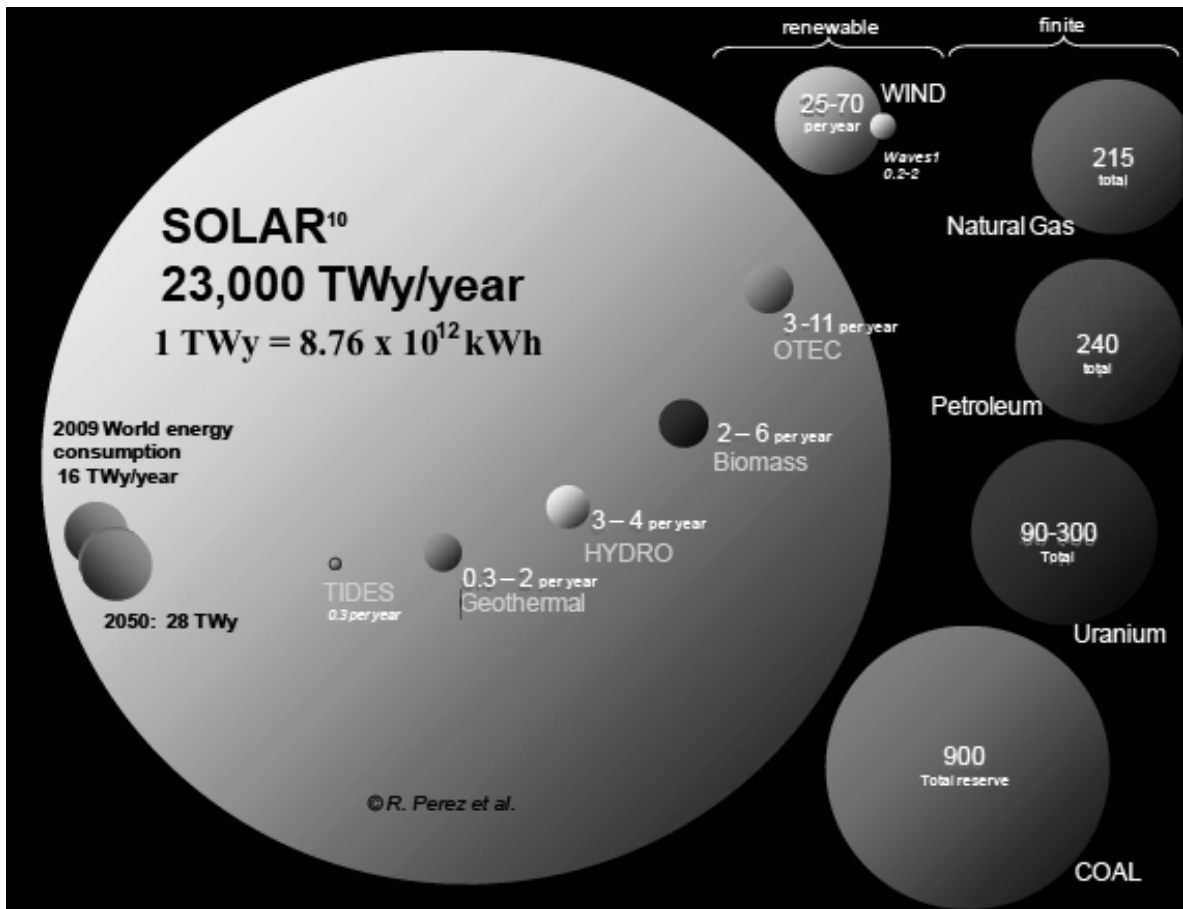
The Broome County Executive Debate was a huge success! On October 24th candidates Patrick Brennan and Debbie Preston answered questions submitted by audience members. It was moderated by WSKG's Bill Jaker and held at BCC's Little Theatre. It was a full house with 130 people in attendance. Print and other media were out in full force for the most high profile and contested race in Broome County. Additionally, the debate was taped by BCC Students enrolled in a communications class. A big thank you to the following League members who volunteered: Jane Detrick, Jane Park, Peg Williams, Marilyn Myers, Sue Ruff, Fred and Alice Brooks, Clare Simone, Barbara Shope, Karl Wokan and Doris Lawton.

Vote 411

Initial results are in from the NYS League regarding public participation and web activity for Vote 411 in 2011. Vote 411 received public website visits from 488 cities across the state. Although overall web activity was not as strong as hoped for (or anticipated), we are pleased to report that the numbers indicate that Binghamton was ranked 20th. When including nearby municipalities in Broome and Tioga Counties the ranking rose to 6th statewide. There were also visits from communities in Chenango County. *The Press and Sun Bulletin* ran a graphic for Vote 411 in their print copy issues of October 30th and November 8th referring readers to our website. Of note are large spikes in activity on the date of the County Executive Debate on October 24th (when Jane Park made a stage announcement), election day, and the day after. It is believed the November 9th visits were to review election results, also linked by our site to the Broome County Board of Elections. Our web site continues to experience an impressive number of request for pages on the local league. People are looking for the best, reliable, accurate, and up-to-date information on issues of interest.

~ Margaret Goodfellow and Sara Wokan

Graphic showing the incredible potential power available from solar energy. Picture Credit: Dr. Richard Perez, SUNY Albany



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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

Visit lww-broometioga.org for the latest event details

January 24	Solar Energy
February 25	Legislative Breakfast
March 27	Albany Update

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