



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

JUNE 2011

PRESIDENT: KAY SHARP 272-4748
lwvtompkins.org/

EDITOR: ROBERT SILSBEE 273-1436
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PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING

ALL LWV-TC MEMBERS
WELCOME

MONDAY, JULY 25, 7:00 TO 8:30 PM

FLORENCE SMITH'S:
423 SOUTH GENEVA ST.

RSVP: 273-6147 or <flosmith42@aol.com>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Convention was very stimulating. I enjoyed the company of so many enthusiastic and competent women (there was only a handful of men present).

Betsey Swan, LWVNY president, outlined the three basic functions of the League as voter services, citizen education, and advocacy and action. I believe our League is addressing the functions very well with our voter registration and candidate forums, programs, and action taken through our committees. Of course, there is always more we can do, and I think we will this year.

Betsey stressed the importance of building trust and respect in the community. I believe this past year we've accomplished this as shown by the coverage of programs by press and the many requests for moderators for candidate forums.

As we plan our programs for the year, we need to be mindful of the League positions that are

stated in *Impact on Issues*, which can be found on the US League website. There is a 2009-2011 updated version. I hope you will join us on July 25th to plan this year's programs.

There are no new positions and no new state studies. Our focus should be on the National League study, *The Role of Federal Government in Public Education*. Kathleen Yen is chair for our study group. National said that the questions for study will be on their website soon. There are several articles to read. Please contact Kathleen to join this study group.

At the Convention, we had "moments in the sun" where local Leagues had the opportunity to brag. I couldn't pass up the chance to brag about our two committees' successes, our voter services, our stimulating programs, and our news coverage by the Ithaca Journal. I am very proud of the work our League accomplishes each year. Job well done everyone!

Debbie Levin, Vice President for Membership, has sent out the dues letter. Ask yourself "what skills do I want to share with the League,"

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"what role do I want to have in the League."
Please check some of the opportunities in which you can become more involved.

Have a great summer! I'll see you in September.

Kay Sharp

PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING

The purpose of the Program Planning Meeting is to establish a basic calendar of meetings and events for the coming year. We will also celebrate our successes, welcome new Board members and discuss the happenings at the NYS convention. We encourage any interested members of the Tompkins County League to attend and contribute ideas for the coming year.

The meeting will be on Monday, July 25 at 7:00 pm at the home of Florence Smith, 423 South Geneva St., Ithaca. RSVP to 273-6147 or flosmith42@aol.com

Florence Smith

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

The local government committee will organize in September. The objectives will be:

- to monitor local government organizations, especially the City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca and Tompkins County and any other for which there is interest and available personnel. We will do this by developing an observer corps, providing training and support as necessary;
- to start a program for advocacy/action on relevant League positions on local government issues both on the local and state level. This will require a group to research the issues and to organize the action; and
- to work with community groups and individuals interested in the same issues for the purpose of helping to educate people about how government and the LWV work thus how to be effective, to increase the impact of our

advocacy, and to generate increased LWV membership.

Because this is a new item it will need people willing to be members and to work. Please feel free to contact either one of us over the summer to share your interests and concerns.

Beverly Livesay 272-2776

Marnie Johnson 257-2958

LWV-US Education Study

The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education

Although states have the primary responsibility for education, the federal government, through constitutional amendments, legislation, judicial decisions, programs, and funding, has expanded its role and increased its influence. At the June 2010 League of Women Voters National Convention, League representatives adopted a new study, *The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education*.

TIME-FRAME FOR STUDY, DISCUSSION, AND CONSENSUS

- June-July: Five background papers are now available on the website for review as are the consensus questions. Links can be found on our website under "Programs."
- August: 29, 2011, 6 PM: Education Study Committee Meeting, Kay Sharp's home, 278 Black Oak Road, Ithaca (272-4748); everyone is welcome to attend. For information call 257-8199 or email kym@twcnny.rr.com
- September-October: Study and Discussion; additional information will be put online and in the *Bulletin* as it becomes available.
- November 30, 2011: Deadline for Consensus.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

League Positions: The League supports public education through its "Social Policy" positions (equality of opportunity). LWV-US positions can be found in the *Impact on Issues* 2010-2012 on the national League website, www.lwv.org.

A link to the site is available under “Board Resources” on our website, www.lwvtompkins.org

Education Study Background Papers: Links to the background materials and the consensus questions are available on our League website, www.lwvtompkins.org under “Programs,” and include the following five papers:

1. *Role of Federal Government in Public Education: Historical Perspectives*, by Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins and Margaret Hawkins Hill: The four page paper provides a general overview of major federal legislation;
2. *Common Core Standards and Assessments*, by Janelle L. Rivers, PhD: The ten page paper defines the *Common Core State Standards Initiative*, identifies arguments for and against adopting common education standards for grades K-12, and identifies issues (e.g. quality, achievement, assessment, accountability and transparency) being debated nationally;
3. *Early Childhood Education, Equity and Funding*, by Pat Aaron: The six page paper provides an overview of early childhood education programs, their purpose and funding;
4. *Funding and Equity Issues*, by Jean Pierce: The ten page paper explores inequities in wealth, variations in sources of funding of education, effects of inequities in public school funding, and legislative and judicial decisions that address equity in public education;
5. *Legislation and Funding for the Education of Children Who are Disadvantaged*, by Patricia O’Brien Libutti, PhD: The twelve page paper summarizes the reauthorization of *The Elementary and Secondary Education* legislation known as the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the barriers to equity (e.g. children of poverty, in rural areas, impacted by disasters; children who are Native Americans, neglected and delinquent, migrants, homeless, non English speaking, disabled), and provides a timeline of major special education legislation, and includes a table of *Funding of*

Education for Disadvantaged Children by Group and Legislation.

All input is welcome and everyone is encouraged to participate — put 6:00 PM, August 29, 278 Black Oak Road on your calendar.

Kathleen Yen

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Natural Resources Committee has had a busy month. It started on May 2 with our program *The Long-term Economics of Hydrofracking* and ended with participation in Information Sessions on fracking at the LWVNY Convention in Albany and a meeting with two of Governor Cuomo’s staff members.

The panelists for our program on May 2 were Don Barber, Prof. Susan Christopherson, and Prof. John Schwatz. The program was very well attended and the panelists did a wonderful job of exploring the complex issue of the long term economic impact of extraction of natural gas from shale in upstate New York. We now have a video of the event on our website so you can view it at your leisure. The panelists made it clear we should not assume that fracking will bring significant economic benefits without any negative impacts on the upstate economy. In particular, fracking puts our current economic activities of agriculture, production of wine, tourism, and wildlife observation at risk. If these are damaged due to pollution or other disruptive activities it could take decades for them to recover. It is quite possible that any economic gains to be had due to fracking could be outweighed by the costs to our current economic base, especially over the next decade or two. In the more immediate future our municipalities will need to prepare for burdens on the local social and health services, police, and emergency workers. Major road repair will likely be needed due to the presence of hundred and perhaps thousands of trips by large trucks each day.

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The LWVNY Convention was held on Friday, May 20, through Sunday, May 22. Kay Wagner was one of our delegates and she worked with three other League members from around the state to run two information sessions on Hydrofracking on Saturday and attend a meeting with Cuomo staff members on Friday. Beth Radow, a League member from Larchmont is the new Issues Chair for energy extraction and related issues. Kay Worked with Beth, Mary Beilby (Cortland), Susan Multer (Corning), and our committee to prepare the materials for all of these.

On Friday the group met with Tom Congdon, Deputy Secretary for Energy, and Bob Rosenthal, Counsel for Energy and the Environment. N.Y.S. League president Betsey Swan was also able to join the meeting part way through. All of them felt the meeting was quite successful and they left with the understanding that this was the start of a dialogue about the future of energy resources, the environment, and the economy of New York State. The environmental problems of hydrofracking were discussed, but the committee also put economic issues front and center while advocating for the Cuomo administration to work towards New York as a future center for research, development, manufacture and use of renewable energy resources. It was clear from the meeting that the economy is very much on the mind of the administration and this gave us a chance to share our thoughts about the economic downside of fracking, especially when viewed over the long term, and the potential for economic growth via the production of renewables.

The two information sessions at the convention were very well attended and generated a lot of

discussion. At each session a brief introduction to the basic facts about high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing was given, with a focus on how it is done and how it differs from both older methods of drilling and vertical hydrofracking. This was followed by discussions of the air as well as the water pollution that occur, the amount of water that is used, and the networks of roads, compressors, and pipelines that will be needed. Again the economic issues were looked at with an emphasis on the potential effects of fracking on the current upstate economy. The development of renewable energy resources was emphasized along with the need for conservation. The committee receive a great deal of interesting feedback from those who attended these sessions and many members wanted to be kept informed about events and new knowledge surrounding this issue.

May rounded out a productive year for our local Natural Resources Committee. We plan to meet again on Wednesday, August 24, at 10 a.m. at the home of Marnie Johnson. We would love to have some new members on our committee, so please think about joining us. Our plan for next year is to continue to explore issues surrounding drilling and mining for energy resources. In particular we want to learn more about the long term economic, health, labor and sociological impacts of these activities in addition to the environmental ones. The more we have studied the issue of hydrofracking the more we have come to understand that drilling and mining activities touch our lives and a multitude of ways that may not always be obvious at first glance. Our hope is to reach a better understanding of these impacts and share our knowledge with the public.

Kay Wagner

LWV-TC CALENDAR—2011-2012

(tentative programs in italics)

| | | | | |
|----------------|------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| July 25 | Mon | 7:00 pm | 2011-2012 PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING (all members welcome) | Smith |
| | | | (come, help us fill out this calendar) | |
| Aug 22 | Mon | 7:00 pm | Board Training Meeting | TBA |
| Aug 29 | Mon | 6:00 pm | NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE (all members welcome) | Sharp |
| Aug 29 | Mon | 7:00 pm | Board Meeting | Sharp |

JULY 30TH, 2011 — — — MEDICARE TURNS 46!

Medicare is the Solution... Not the Problem!

We plan to commemorate this anniversary in Ithaca — you can help!
Call Rebecca Elgie at 272-0621 with ideas or offers to help with:
letters to the editor, viewpoint articles, a community event, tabling with a petition, ...

Date(s) to be determined
See Healthcare-now.org for more ideas

HEALTH CARE NEWS

Vermont State Bill

This has been a busy month for Health Care reform. In May Vermont passed their Health Care Bill R.202 in both houses and Governor Shulmin signed it into law on May 26th. This bill provides a plan to create a single payer system in the state by 2017 and earlier if they can get a federal waiver before that time. It begins by developing a state exchange which would include everyone, and setting up a board which will develop the benefit package and financing system. This bill could provide a roadmap for other states that are working to develop a universal plan. The bill passed by the legislature states that Vermont will create a publicly financed health care system, Green Mountain Care. Green Mountain Care will provide comprehensive, high-quality coverage for all Vermont residents as a public good, regardless of income, health status, or employment. Green Mountain Care will be implemented once the requirements of the federal health reform law have been fulfilled, along with several other conditions. The Vermont legislature will decide about the financing of the system and the health benefits package by 2013.

The plan has three stages:

The first stage (beginning July 2011 and running through 2013) has four components:

- establishment of a five-member Vermont Health Reform Board, the general purpose of which is to develop mechanisms for reducing the rate of growth of healthcare spending;
- establishment of a Health Benefit Exchange for Vermont (under the Department of Vermont Health Access), in accordance with the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA);
- planning and studies;
- other immediate initiatives.

The second stage (2014) consists of implementing (beginning to enroll people in) the exchange.

- The third stage (2017 -- or 2014 if federal law permits) is the transition of the exchange to a “single-payer” healthcare system, Green Mountain Care.

National Bills

At the national level Senator Sanders (S703) and Rep. McDermott (HR 1200) introduced the American Health Security Act, providing coverage for everyone, financed with modest taxes which would be less than current premiums, deductibles and out of pocket costs. It would be federally funded but administered by the states. It funds community centers and addresses the shortage of primary care physicians and dentists. This is in addition to the Conyers bill HR676, which is still gaining support: “The fight to reform our nation’s healthcare system has only just begun.” AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt

Baker declared the Federation's support for the companion single-payer bills submitted by Senator Sanders and Congressman McDermott.

Convention News

We worked with the Saratoga League in sponsoring 2 caucuses at the NYS LWV Convention entitled *Medicare: What's Brewing?*

Pat Reed, Saratoga Co League presented information from the Urban Institute Report and the Mailman School of Public Health Report on the most cost and quality effective healthcare system for New York. Both studies confirmed that a single payer approach would provide the greatest level of coverage and the most comprehensive benefits package. It would shift the cost to New York state government but this net cost would be offset by reductions in spending by employers and individuals and would realize the greatest saving in administrative expenses.

Rebecca Elgie, LWV- TC, discussed the pros and cons of the bills HR676 and HR1200/S703. Both bills would provide universal coverage with a very comprehensive plan for everyone at lower cost to both employers and employees. The cost reduction is realized through lower administrative costs and greater bargaining power for purchasing prescription drugs and medical supplies. HR676 would be administered federally whereas HR1200/S703 would be administered state by state. The Vermont bill, which was just passed, and the movement among 20 other states to develop their own bills is providing a process by which states can develop models of different programs at the state level which would hopefully lead to a national system. Many Leagues across the country are supporting state movements in their communities. Assemblyman Gottfried has just re-introduced his single payer bill in the NY assembly and Barbara Lifton is a co-sponsor.

Carol Huxtable from Utica/Rome LWV discussed the Medicaid Redesign Report that targeted Medicaid spending and includes

recommendations to redesign and restructure the Medicaid program to be more efficient and get better results for patients. The goal was to identify a package of proposals for consideration in the budget process to achieve needed savings and avoid large cuts to providers, institutions, individuals and communities.

The sessions were well attended and participants had many questions and continued the discussion after the designated time.

During the session devoted to Directions to the Board we requested that the LWV-NYS support legislation which would lead to a single payer health plan and that they send a letter in support of the Gottfried bill, A07860.

Rebecca Elgie

REPORT FROM CONVENTION/MEMBERSHIP

Membership renewal letters will be sent out in early June. Please take a few minutes to renew your membership for the next year and to fill out the questionnaire on the back. It is important that we know how you wish to receive the Bulletin, and ways in which you would like to be involved in League activities.

I went to my first LWVNY convention in Albany on May 20 and 21. It was an exhilarating, informative and exhausting experience. We got started very early in the morning, and kept going with various meetings until bedtime.

The first membership meeting that I attended started with a question: "Who is on the membership committee?" Answer: EVERYBODY. All of our members should be recruiting new members. One of the best ways to do this is to bring a friend to the League's monthly meetings.

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Increasing the numbers, however, should not be an end in itself. We also want to get people involved in leadership roles, in serving on committees and participating in study groups.

A highlight of the convention was an address by Madeleine May Kunin, former Vermont governor and former US Ambassador to Switzerland. Ms. Kunin served as governor of Vermont from 1985 to 1991. The focus of her talk was why more women don't run for office. She feels that women do not value the work that they do. For instance, they tend to downgrade the time that they spend raising children. When they get back into the workforce, they often treat those years as "lost," and not as important as the years that their male colleagues have spent working for pay. Ms. Kunin says that those years are just as important and fulfilling as

what the men were doing, and women should emphasize that experience more. She asked us where we thought the US fell compared to other countries in numbers of nationally elected women. She produced a long piece of paper with hundreds of names of countries on it (she called it her power point.) I don't remember exactly where the US fell, but it was about 47th. And who was first? Rwanda. Ms. Kunin said that she talked to a Rwandan woman politician who told her that after the massacres, a group of women got together and decided that things had to change and be put right. A good number of them ran for office and won. The talk was very informative and, at times, funny.

All together the experience at the convention was very rewarding.

Deborah Levin

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2011-12

LWV NYS website

LWV US website

LWV-Tompkins County

leave message at

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Board Members

| | | | |
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| 6/12 Vice. Pres. Membership | Debbie Levin | 273-7746 | dlevin01@twcnj.rr.com |
| 6/13 Secretary | Julie Ann Dickens | 589-4053 | dickens.julie@yahoo.com |
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| 6/12 Director Bulletin | Robert Silsbee | 273-1436 | rhs1@cornell.edu |
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| 6/13 Director Co-Youth Program | Susan Henninger | 387-7544 | sue@fingerlakeswriter.com |
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| | | | |
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