



League of Women Voters of Smithtown Township

VOTER

The LWV is a non-partisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy

December 2008

website: <http://www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org/smithtown.htm>

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LWV Smithtown Holiday Party

Thursday, December 11, 2008

5:30 pm at the
Mills Pond House
Rt. 25A, St. James



Guest Speaker at 6:00 pm:

Josephine Connolly-Schoonen, PhD, RD, CD/N

Clinical Assistant Professor, Clinical Nutritionist,
Department of Family Medicine, University Hospital & Medical Center at Stony Brook
author of

Losing Weight Permanently with the Bull's-Eye Food Guide

Raffle prizes will include: gift baskets and holiday plants

Raffle books are included in this December issue of the VOTER

Please mail donation (payable to LWV Smithtown) + filled-out tickets to:

Mary Zopf, 21 Greene Drive, Commack, NY 11725

Please bring some type of food to share:

appetizers, finger foods, desserts, drinks, etc.

RSVP details of what you will bring ASAP

email: ejrosen@optonline.net or 265-6463 Joyce Rosenthal

President's Message

It has been a very long election season this year. Our Voter Service volunteers began working in August. We participated in various registration drives, speaking engagements and assisting in candidate's forums. Judy Roth and Carol Mellor from the LWV of the Hamptons conducted a general meeting for us introducing our membership to the Compact for the National Popular Vote. We will be coming to consensus on this topic before May. More information will be available from LWVUS in the near future.

In an effort to keep our general meetings diversified our last general meeting dealt with the revitalization of downtown Smithtown, Kings Park and St. James; the three areas within the town of Smithtown that have downtown areas. Thanks to the director of the Smithtown Planning Department and members of the Greater Smithtown Chamber of Commerce we were appraised of the measures necessary to improve conditions within the three areas.

Our next general membership event will be our holiday party that will be held at the Mills Pond House, Thursday, December 11th. Our guest speaker is Dr. Joanne Connolly Schooner whose area of expertise is nutrition. We can all learn a lot from her. Members are invited to bring guests to hear her and enjoy our celebration of the holiday season.

Joyce Rosenthal

Town Board 11/408

A.M. All of the Town Board were present except for Supervisor Vecchio.

The Board approved the designs for two new banks in St. James - the Commerce Bank on the southeast corner of Lake Ave. and Moriches Road and a new Bank of Smithtown Branch on the west side of Route 25A north of Edgewood Ave. The Smithtown Historical Society met with both banks to approve their brick facades.

Councilwoman Patricia Biancaniello was concerned about the staffing needs of the school age child care program and she asked for an account clerk. She said this would not cost the town any additional funds since it is funded entirely by the parents. She said there is a dire need for this additional clerk since there are complaints about phone access and she asked to amend the budget to allow this hiring. Councilman Ed Wehrheim said there were three clerical positions open and he could only support this resolution if all three positions were filled in order to treat all fairly.

P.M. All were present but after the routine resolutions and personnel matters were taken care of there were no members of the public who wished to speak, perhaps because it was Election Day.

Mary Zopf, Observer



The League of Women Voters of Smithtown thanks Allison J. Cruz, Executive Director and the staff of the Smithtown Township Arts Council/ Mills Pond House Gallery for its support of the League.

We encourage all Town Residents to support the Arts Council, participate in its cultural programs, and visit the historic Mills Pond House in St. James. For info: www.stacarts.org.

Delegates at LWVUS Convention 2008 voted to study the advisability of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact among the states as a method for electing the U.S. President. LWV Smithtown members heard Carol Mellor and Judi Roth of LWV Hamptons present arguments for and against the Compact. Please read the New York Times editorial below for their point of view on the Electoral College and the recent Presidential Election.

The New York Times, November 20, 2008
Editorial

Flunking the Electoral College

On Dec. 15, the United States will endure a quadrennial ritual born in the economics and politics of slavery and the quill-pen era. Members of the Electoral College are scheduled to meet in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to formally choose the next president.

There is no real doubt about how the electors will vote, but it is disturbing that they have any role at all in making this vital choice in the 21st century. The Electoral College is more than just an antiquated institution: it actively disenfranchises voters and occasionally (think 2000) makes the candidate with fewer popular votes president. American democracy would be far stronger without it.

There is no reason to feel sentimental about the Electoral College. One of the main reasons the founders created it was slavery. The southern states liked the fact that their slaves, who would be excluded from a direct vote, would be counted — as three-fifths of a white person — when Electoral College votes were apportioned.

The founders also were concerned, in the day of the wooden printing press, that voters would not have enough information to choose among presidential candidates. It was believed that it would be easier for them to vote for local officials, whom they knew more about, to be electors. It is hard to imagine that significant numbers of voters thought they did not know enough about Barack Obama and John McCain by Election Day this year.

And, while these reasons for the Electoral College have lost all relevance, its disadvantages loom ever larger. To start, the system excludes many voters from a meaningful role in presidential elections. If you live in New York or Texas, for example, it is generally a foregone conclusion which party will win your state's electoral votes, so your vote has less meaning — and it can feel especially meaningless if you vote on the losing side. On the other hand, if you live in Florida or Ohio, where the outcome is less clear, your vote has a greatly magnified importance.

Voters in small states are favored because Electoral College votes are based on the number of senators and representatives a state has. Wyoming's roughly 500,000 people get three electoral votes. California, which has about 70 times Wyoming's population, gets only 55 electoral votes.

The Electoral College also makes America seem more divided along blue-red lines than it actually is. If you look at an Electoral College map, California appears solidly blue and Alabama solidly red. But if you look at a map of the popular votes, you see a more nuanced picture. More than 4.5 million Californians voted for Mr. McCain (roughly as many votes as he got in Texas), while about 40 percent of voters in Alabama cast a ballot for Mr. Obama.

One of the biggest problems with the Electoral College, of course, is that three times since the Civil War — most recently, with George W. Bush in 2000 — it has awarded the presidency to the loser of the popular vote. The president should be the candidate who wins the votes of the most Americans.

The best way to abolish the Electoral College is to amend the Constitution. Until that happens, a national popular vote movement is working to get states representing a majority of the electoral votes to agree to award their votes to the candidate who has the most votes nationally. That would effectively end the Electoral College. Several states, including New Jersey and Illinois, have already enacted popular vote laws, and others are considering it.

When the 2012 presidential election approaches, efforts to reform the electoral system will be viewed through a partisan prism, with a focus on which party they would help or hurt. With the next election still four years away, now is an ideal time to get serious about abolishing the Electoral College.

Smithtown Revitaliation

On Wednesday November 19th LWV of Smithtown sponsored an informational program at our Main Library concerning problems surrounding plans for revitalizing our downtown and what steps should or could be taken to solve them.

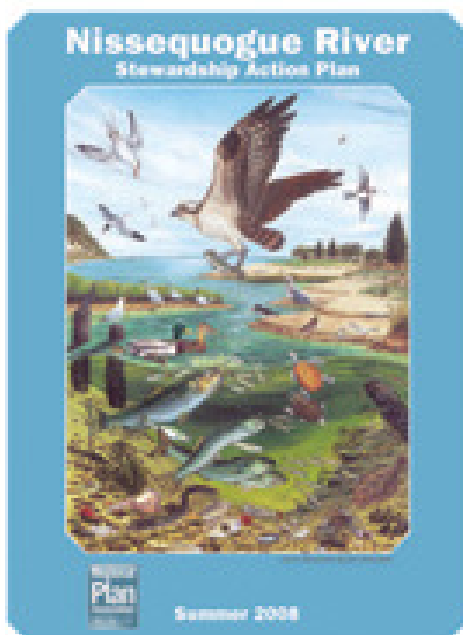
Frank DeRubeis, Director of Planning and Continuity Development for the Town of Smithtown spoke about history, progress and current plans. The Greater Smithtown Chamber of Commerce Downtown Revitalization Committee, led by Vice President Mark Mancini, then presented specific ideas and illustrations of their initiatives and recommendations for downtown Smithtown.

Historically a downtown area has provided a “sense of place”, shown characteristics which define a particular community and give its citizens an identity. Over time commercial development in the larger community of Suffolk County, or Long Island as a whole, has eroded this local identity. Traffic density increased everywhere and specifically on the major state road which is our local “Main Street” through our downtown. Parking in town became a problem as did crossing from one side of this busy thoroughfare to the other. People gravitated to the more convenient, Malls, Big Box stores, discount stores, strip centers, even internet shopping. There was little reason to bother coming downtown. Merchants, losing profits, felt they could not afford beautification projects. The downtown could not expand to offer more facilities and living space which might attract people back (Smart Growth—as has been done in some communities) because the infrastructure, most seriously sewage disposal, could not support expansion. This problem remains.

A viable downtown area must be pedestrian friendly. Ours is not. It is difficult and dangerous to cross from one side of Main Street to the other. Changes must be made. Building a median, establishing left turn lanes, providing more off street parking, have been suggested. Funds will be required, probably from various government sources. County Legislators Kennedy and Nowick recognize this need. John Flanagan and Michael Fitzpatrick support our needs as does Rep. Tim Bishop. We need cooperation from the Town Board as well.

The Chamber predicts that the downtown will be sewered within 3-5 years and has hope that the federal government will use public works projects as economic stimulus and to provide workforce employment.

Sondra Irvine



[Nissequogue Stewardship Action Plan Released](#)

At 2 pm on Monday, November 24th, at Sunken Meadow State Park, business, civic, and environmental organizations joined local elected officials to release the Nissequogue River Stewardship Action Plan Prepared by the Regional Plan Association and the Nissequogue Stewardship Steering Committee, which includes member of the LWV Smithtown. The plan contains an overview of the watershed, a summary of the project process and over 100 actions intended to ensure the management and protection of the Nissequogue River watershed.

for the full text of the Stewardship Action Plan, visit:

http://www.rpa.org/pdf/temp/robertf/NissequogueStewardship_sm.pdf

Court Restructuring (LWVNYS State November Board Report)

Unfortunately, the current legislative session in Albany has not produced a court restructuring constitutional amendment ready for first passage by the legislature. However, there are some encouraging signs in terms of taking steps to improve on the current town and village court system.

In September of 2008, the Special Commission on the Future of the New York State Courts, appointed by Chief Judge Judith Kaye and chaired by New York City attorney Carey Dunne, released its report and recommendations, after having studied the NYS system of town and village justice courts for 18 months. Under the current system, there are 1,250 town and village courts throughout the state. Many of the justices (about 75%) presiding over these courts are non-lawyers.

The Dunne commission is offering some very sensible improvements over the current system:

1. set minimum standards for safety and fitness of the court facility
 2. set minimum age and training requirements for the justices; they should be 25 years or older, hold at least a two-year college degree and attend seven weeks of training instead of the current one week
 1. consolidate some of the courts with overlapping jurisdictions, potentially saving taxpayer money
- allow defendants with misdemeanor charges to be tried before a justice who has been trained as an attorney.

The commission has stopped short of recommending that all justices be trained as lawyers. They have concentrated instead on recommendations that may be realistically achievable. The recommendations will require action by the state legislature, but no constitutional amendment.

The president of the state-wide Magistrates Association, Mark Farrell, spoke at the press conference releasing the commission's report. He expressed support for some parts of the report, but stated that his organization opposes consolidation of any of the courts and the opt-out proposal in misdemeanor cases.

While the report does not address the League's long-standing support for restructuring of the major trial courts, it does point out shortcomings in the current town and village justice court system and gives some constructive recommendations how to address them. The League should be supportive of these recommendations which would present a step in the right direction of court reform.

Smithtown Town Board Meeting Schedule

Tuesday: December 2

9:30 am work session
2:00 pm regular meeting

*Smithtown Town Hall
Second Floor Board Room*

Thursday: December 18

7:00 pm regular meeting

*Eugene A. Cannataro
Senior Citizen Center
420 Middle Country Road, Smithtown, NY.*

Library Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule

Regular meeting:

Tuesday: December 16
Smithtown Main Library at 7pm

The League of Women Voters of Smithtown, The Town of Smithtown Youth Bureau, and the Smithtown Library will coordinate a LeaderSpark program for Smithtown teens on three Thursday evenings in March, 2009.

Dates and specifics of the program will be announced in the January issue of the Smithtown Library Newsletter which is available at all four library branches, and online at the Smithtown Library website <http://www.smithlib.org>.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this wonderful opportunity to nurture and grow leadership skills in the youth of Smithtown Township, please contact Lisa Scott via email at lisawscott@optonline.net

LeaderSpark
Igniting organizations | to build young leaders

Update on Great Lakes Issues (LWVNY State November Board Report)

Healing Our Waters (HOW) Great Lakes Coalition reached a milestone recently, growing to over 100 groups in the Great Lakes Region. The HOW coalition continues to grow and diversify. This growth symbolizes the importance of health of the Great Lakes, which are essential to the economic and cultural identity of our region. HOW members, who include the LWV of Michigan, Ohio, and New York State, recognize we have manageable solutions contained in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are a unique and precious resource, providing freshwater for 40 million people who live within the basin and supporting the region's ecosystem and economy. It is the only freshwater system of its kind in size and ecological diversity and is essential to humans and wildlife alike, providing homes, food, recreation, and economic sustainability. The Great Lakes are a vast resource, but each year rainfall and snowmelt replenish only about one percent of the water in the basin. The other 99 percent is finite and nonrenewable. That fact coupled with a growing demand for water by domestic uses and the

growing impacts from climate change is cause for concern about the Great Lakes' future. Current laws are not strong enough to protect the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Compact is an historic eight-state water management agreement that protects the nation's largest fresh surface water resource, the Great Lakes. A decade in the making, the Great Lakes Compact, for the first time ever treats groundwater and surface water as one system subject to the same standard; considers the Great Lakes and their tributaries to be one ecosystem; establishes protection of Great Lakes Ecosystems and economies as priorities everywhere in the basin; ensures that every Great Lake state will have the same fair set of rational protections, while allowing each state flexibility. The U.S. Senate and House have approved the Compact, and the President has signed it into law.

The Great Lakes Legacy Act, which provides for sediment remediation projects on rivers and harbors on the Great Lakes, passed in the U.S. House, 411 to 9. The Senate amended the bill and lowered the authorized funding to current levels, or \$50 million a year. The House had to accept the Senate amendments before the bill could go to the President for his signature, which is set to happen in the next week or so.



The League of Women Voters of New York State in association with

The United Nations Department of Public Information



BRIEFINGS ON THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL WARMING ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD

**Tuesday, December 2, 2008 from *1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
at the United Nations Headquarters in NYC -- First Avenue at 46th Street**

(*LWVNYS Registration Desk will be open from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., Briefings will start promptly at 1:30 p.m.*)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 518-465-4162

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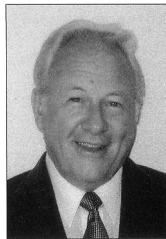


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Bonnie Luisi
Branch Manager

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Phone: 631-543-7400 Fax: 631-543-2754
E-mail: bluisi@bankofsmithtown.net

League of Women Voters of Smithtown
Membership Registration

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Telephone # _____

Email _____

Even if you do not have time for active participation, your membership alone will strengthen our voice.

Individual Membership	\$50.00
Household (2 at same address)	70.00
Student Membership	20.00
Additional Contribution	_____
Total	\$ _____

Make dues checks payable to LWV of Smithtown and mail to:

LWV of Smithtown
c/o Mary Zopf
21 Greene Drive
Commack, NY 11725

Please note:

If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the League beyond the dues amount, a separate check for the donation must be written to "LWVNYS Education Foundation" and mailed to the address above. Thank you.



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OF SMITHTOWN**

**322 River Road
St. James, NY 11780**

Address Correction Requested

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DATES TO REMEMBER

December 2008

Mon.	Dec.1	LWV Smithtown Board Meeting, Smithtown Main Library, 7pm
Tues.	Dec. 2	Town Board Meetings, 9:30am-Work Session; 2pm-Regular Meeting, Town Hall
Thurs.	Dec. 11	LWV Smithtown Holiday Party, Mills Pond House, 5:30pm
Tues.	Dec. 16	Library Board Meeting, Smithtown Main Library, 7pm
Wed.	Dec. 17	LWVSC Board Meeting, Riverhead Library 10:00-11:45am
Thurs.	Dec. 18	Town Board Meeting, Senior Citizens Center, 7pm