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A NON-PARTISAN ORGANIZATION WHICH ENCOURAGES POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH INFORMED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS IN GOVERNMENT. THE LEAGUE DOES NOT ENDORSE CANDIDATES NOR SUPPORT POLITICAL PARTIES BUT DOES TAKE A POSITION AND ACTS ON CERTAIN GOVERNMENTAL ISSUES AFTER THOROUGH STUDY.

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MAY 2008

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GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 19, 2008 at 1:00 P.M.

We Welcome

**The HONORABLE KATE MURRAY
Supervisor, Town of Hempstead**

**Topic: What is doing in our Town of Hempstead?
Long and Short Range Perspectives**

**at the Hewlett-Woodmere Library
1125 Broadway, Hewlett**

Guests welcome.

Refreshments served.

NEW YORK IS NOW OFFICIALLY AN OPTICAL SCAN STATE

On October 29, 2002 the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) was signed by President Bush. HAVA mandated that lever voting machines be replaced in states using them. Under federal law, NYS must replace nearly 20,000 lever action voting machines in more than 15,570 election districts.

Vendors submitted applications for 2 types of voting machines to the State Board of Elections. DRE's, a touch screen type, can be hacked into, is very cumbersome, slow, malfunctions, very expensive to buy and maintain and does not have a paper trail. The League of Women Voters and New Yorkers for Verified Voting have lobbied long and hard in and out of court to have the NYS Board of Elections certify the optical scan machines which have a paper trail. Voters use pens to mark a paper ballot which is inserted into scanner for validation. It is easy, reliable, auditable, accessible, cost effective, easy to store and comes with a Ballot Marking Device to assist people with visual, hearing, mobility & language difficulties in marking their ballots.

57 counties in NYS placed machine orders for the optical scan machine. We thank members of our Nassau County leagues for their tremendous lobbying effort.

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IMPROVING ENERGY CONSUMPTION

by U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer

The recent passage in the Senate of H.R. 6, the Clean Energy Act of 2007, provided an important first step toward improving the ways our nation uses energy. This bill includes substantial increases in fuel economy standards for cars, including a 35mpg standard by 2020 and closing the SUV and flex-fuel-vehicle loopholes. The Senate's success in this area will reduce our consumption of foreign oil by 10.7 billion gallons annually by 2020. I believe that H.R.6 makes important steps towards curbing climate change. For the first time in decades, the Senate has produced a bill that does not give tax breaks to big oil, but instead gives incentives to companies to use renewable fuel sources, makes significant improvements in cars' fuel economy, and requires improved energy efficiency in government actions.

However, there is still more to be done. I introduced four amendments to the energy bill which would improve energy efficiency in practical, cost-effective ways. The first would require power utilities to gradually reduce their fuel consumption by improving their efficiency to reach a final target of 10% less fuel use by 2020. The second amendment required states to make their building codes 30% more efficient. The third and fourth amendments would improve energy efficiency in appliances like washing machines, commercial boilers, and air conditioners. All told, these four amendments would have saved the same energy as would taking more than 150 million cars off the road. Unfortunately, none of these amendments were included in the final bill, but I will continue to push for these, and other, energy efficiency ideas.

I also support several other bills aimed at helping to slow this crisis. I am a co-sponsor of S.590, Securing America's Energy Independence Act of 2007, which extends and improves tax credits for individuals and companies to invest in solar technology. I also co-sponsored the Clean Air Planning Act, S.1177, a multi-pollutant bill that will require fossil-fuel-fired power plants to cut their emissions of four dangerous compounds, including carbon dioxide. This bill will halt the increase in CO₂ emissions in 2012 and will implement a 57% cut from today's levels by 2050. I was also an original co-sponsor of S. 339, the DRIVE Act, which will reduce our oil use through a range of actions – from improving fuel economies to encouraging development along existing transit corridors, rather than into new areas. It was passed by the Senate as part H.R 6.

Climate change matters to all of us and we need smart, pragmatic policies now if we are to address this crisis. We cannot afford to delay action in the hope that a "silver bullet" will save us: there will be no perfect new technology to produce infinite energy, no special sponge to take carbon out of the air, no global air-conditioning system. It takes lots of smart changes in the ways that we make and use energy to fix this problem, and we need to approach this complex problem from every angle possible.

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“PROJECT SUNLIGHT”

The Attorney General, Andrew Cuomo, invited League members to be present at the News Conference unveiling “Project Sunlight”, a new state website that allows New Yorkers unprecedented access to government information. We were one of only a select group that the Attorney General asked to be present for this unveiling.

“Project Sunlight” will greatly increase our advocacy efforts concerning campaign finance reform lobbying contributions and ethics. This will, for the first time, open state government and shine light on the sometimes-murky underbelly of Albany. This will **greatly increase impact** our ability to know who is influencing state government and with how much money.

According to information from the Attorney General’s office, “Project Sunlight” will also allow users (both those with extensive experience in government and those with little) the opportunity to easily examine state records – agency contracts, campaign finance, charities, corporate registrations, legislation, lobbying, and member items. In addition, the website will offer educational materials including fact sheets, links to other agencies and video presentations. This will allow the public to help make New York a national model of openness.

This website will not be the final word, it is only the beginning. Leagues across the state can provide vital feedback to the Attorney General’s office regarding how the website works and how they can make “Project Sunlight” more comprehensive and useful to all those who use it.

BLAIR and NYPIRG

The League of Women Voters of New York State is thrilled to welcome Blair Horner’s return to the New York Public Research Group (NYPIRG). Blair has been a trusted colleague for many years working with the League to create a more open, transparent and accountable government here in New York State. We look forward to working with Blair and NYPIRG on many issues including government reform, healthcare and the environment.

CHOOSING THE PRESIDENT 2008

The League of Women Voters Education Fund is once again updating our comprehensive guide to the presidential election process, **Choosing the President 2008**. Read about the participants (the voters, candidates, parties, media, and who gives and who gets the money) and the process (the primaries, caucuses, nominating conventions, the general election campaign and election day).

This book is an essential read for every one – students, first time voters and long time voters – as we prepare for the 2008 presidential election. Its discounted price is \$11.00, tax and shipping not included. Order from LWNYS, 62 Grand St., Albany, N.Y. Phone 518-465-4162 Fax: 518-465-0812, email: lwny@lwny.org

PUBLIC ADVOCACY FOR VOTER PROTECTION

The League of Women Voters Education Fund’s (LWVEF) Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Project was created to help bolster the League’s capacity for continuing and expanding its critical state-based advocacy in order to prevent the disenfranchisement of eligible citizens, particularly underserved populations.

The League is working to:

- 1) Oppose ID and Documentary Proof of Citizenship
 - 2) Improve Administration of Statewide Voter Database Systems
 - 3) Guard Against Undue Restrictions on Voter Registration
 - 4) Improve Polling Place Management
 - 5) Improve Poll Worker Training and Strengthening Poll Workers
-

LWV of NASSAU COUNTY

The Nassau County Inter League Organization (ILO) is planning to work together with the Suffolk County ILO on programs and projects of mutual interest and concern. We will also be sharing information on our various activities.

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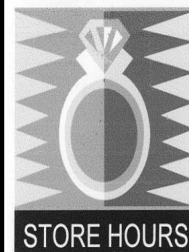


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SCHOOL AID AGREEMENT

The 2008-2009 education budget enacts a record \$1.75 billion increase in funding for public education; the key issue delaying the education budget was not how much money would be spent but how it would be distributed across the state. \$1.2 billion of the \$1.75 billion is distributed through the foundation formula that was enacted last year to take the politics out of school aid and distribute basic classroom operating aid based upon student need. However, more than \$100 million was added to this budget at the insistence of the State Senate Majority in order to accommodate the demands of the Long Island Senate delegation for so-called Long Island “shares” – a politically pre-determined division of aid based upon geography, not student need.

“The \$1.75 billion school aid agreement shaped by Speaker Silver and Governor Paterson is historic because it keeps their promise to deliver the second of the four-year commitment to resolve the CFE (Campaign for Fiscal Equity) lawsuit,” said Geri Palast, Executive Director, Campaign for Fiscal Equity. “It will ultimately provide a sound basic education to all public school students by driving the majority of funds through a formula based on need, subject to accountability through the Contract for Excellence with a strong public voice.”

“The record school aid increase is remarkable, but more important is that two-thirds of the new funds are distributed fairly and equitably based upon student need thus maintaining the promise that was enacted into law last year,” said Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education (AQE). “Make no doubt about it, the State Assembly dug in their heels to deliver fairness and equity in education funding throughout the state and Governor Paterson stood with them. Meanwhile the state Senate Majority used all their chits to drive a boatload of money to politically well-healed downstate suburban districts. Sadly many upstate Senators barely lifted a finger to add additional foundation aid for their own districts.”

Today’s education budget represents year two of a four-year commitment to fundamentally transform the quality of education in New York state. Last year, after 14 years of lawsuits and public demand for educational opportunities for every child, the state committed to a four year \$5.5 billion increase in basic classroom operating aid, also called foundation aid, to be distributed fairly in order to promote education equity. Only one year later the commitment to educate every child was threatened, first by Governor Spitzer’s budget that proposed to reduce this year’s promised increase by \$350 million. Subsequently, the State Senate Majority budget also proposed to under fund the promised foundation aid increases for upstate districts and New York City while adding \$140 million in new aid primarily targeted to Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Meanwhile the State Assembly budget proposed to restore \$300 million in foundation aid for districts upstate and downstate while rejecting the extra aid to fund Long Island “shares”. The budget enacted today melds much of the approaches of the Assembly and Senate Majorities with the foundation aid promised for New York City being delivered by the Assembly and the Governor and the Senate Majority securing its priority of added aid for downstate suburban districts. However, the Senate Majority did not agree to the foundation aid increases for upstate communities proposed by the Assembly, opting instead to prioritize funding for downstate suburban districts.

The Assembly and the Governor preserved the Contracts for Excellence as the central accountability tool, made the contracts cumulative to retain the full investment within the accountability structure, and modified the contracts to create a multi-tiered approach that permits some flexibility to reflect varying needs of school districts. Programs designed to serve English Language Learners were added to the best practices menu with the Contracts for Excellence which already included: class size reduction, teacher and principal quality initiatives, additional instructional time for students, high school and middle school restructuring, and expansion of half-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs to full-day.

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RENEWED FUNDING

The League has received renewed funding from the Open World Leadership Center to host **Ukrainian visitors in October 2008**. Three delegations, each consisting of six Ukrainians, will be hosted by three leagues.

On the domestic front, the League has launched a multi-year project funded by Oxfam of America. 17 Leagues have been selected to hold forums on a range of global warming issues between April and October 2008.

On March 29th, the League participated in a national conference on “**Women and Politics: Challenges and Possibilities**” in **Kaunas, Lithuania**. The League was represented by Elona Vaisnys, a member of the Lithuanian Parliament-World Lithuanian Community Commission.

LWVUS Deputy Executive Director Zaida Arguedas is traveling to **St. Petersburg and Moscow (Russia) and Baku (Azerbaijan)** this spring. She will meet with U.S. Embassy officials, Open World Leadership officers and members of the network of women organizations to work on elections and election processes.

The League has partnered with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to host a delegation of **13 women legislators from Columbia, Guatemala and Mexico in May**. The national office will work with the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County to organize a dialogue with Maryland State Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez.

LEAGUE PARTNERS WITH YWCA USA

The LWVUS and YWCA USA are collaborating this election year by encouraging local Leagues and local YWCAs to work together on voter outreach and education activities such as voter registration and debate watching parties. The YWCA USA represents more than 2 million women, girls and their families and has nearly 300 associations nationwide. Its mission is the elimination of racism and the empowerment of women. During election years, the YWCAs actively participate in voter engagement and voter education – registering voters, handing out voter guides and Election Day information to potential voters, hosting issues briefings and candidate forums, assisting people who want to vote early, and holding one-on-one conversations with women on the importance of voting. For more information about the YWCA USA, visit www.ywca.org.

STAY INFORMED

The League of Women Voters has all the information you need at VOTE411.org –the one-stop shop for all our election information needs, including a nationwide polling place locator, voter registration tips, important dates, and much more.

Visit VOTE411.org and click on “Sign up” to receive special VOTE411 alerts that will keep you in the know about general and state-specific information on all the aspects of the election process. There is no other single resource that provides this level of comprehensive information.

NATIONAL SECURITY LETTERS REFORM ACT H.R. 3189

The PATRIOT act and Intelligence Authorization Act of 2004 drastically expanded the FBI’s authority to obtain the business and personal records of Americans by issuing National Security Letters (NSLs). NSLs do not require prior judicial approval and can be used to obtain a wide range of documents based upon vague claims that the information is merely “relevant” to a terrorism investigation. Once the FBI acquires the records with an NSL, it can keep them indefinitely, even when it concludes that the subject of those records is innocent of any crime and is not of intelligence interest.

The NSL Reform Act includes many beneficial reforms such as: It would protect Americans’ privacy by requiring that NSLs only be used to obtain records that pertain to suspected terrorists or spies. Thus, it would re-establish the pre-PATRIOT Act requirement that there be specific and articulable facts giving reason to believe that the records sought pertain to an agent of a foreign power. It would also establish reasonable limits on the “gag” that attaches to an NSL, requiring it to be narrowly tailored and limiting it to 30-days, extendable by a court. The bill also provides for a recipient’s right to seek judicial review of an NSL issued to it. The bill would require the Attorney General to issue minimization procedures for information obtained with an NSL, and enhance oversight by requiring additional reporting to Congress.

The above was part of a letter addressed to the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the House Committee on the Judiciary and signed by 22 organizations plus the League of Women Voters of the United States. Copies were sent to all members of the House Judiciary Committee.



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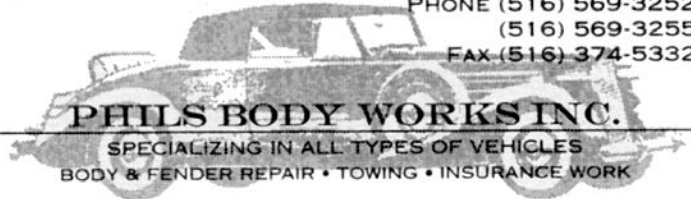
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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS BELIEVES:

- in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the constitution of the United States;
- that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizens' right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible;
- that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education which provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination;
- that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing and coordination among different agencies and levels of government;
- that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems which affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies which facilitate the solution of international problems;
- that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that the development of an international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

by **SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR**

“Judicial independence does not just happen all by itself. It is tremendously hard to create, and easier than most people imagine to destroy.”

LEAGUE OPPOSES DEPORTATIONS, SUPPORTS EARNED CITIZENSHIP FOR UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS

The League of Women Voters announced its official position on immigration reform policy.

“After a lengthy and comprehensive study of this complex issue by our grassroots members,” said national League president Mary G. Wilson, “the League’s position calls for a path to citizenship for current unauthorized immigrants.”

“As part of overall immigration reform, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics and meeting other relevant criteria,” Wilson stated, “We oppose deportations of current unauthorized immigrants who have no history of serious criminal activity,” she said.

The full immigration policy approved by the national League’s Board of Directors in March was studied by the League’s members for more than eighteen months. The policy achieved member consensus through a survey of the nearly 850 local Leagues.

Other elements of the League’s position include support for increased enforcement personnel at borders, more effective tracking of individuals who enter the U.S., and significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers. Furthermore, the League will champion due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing right to counsel, right of appeal and right to humane treatment. The League position set criteria for legal admission to the U.S., including family reunification of spouses or minor children; economic, business and employment needs in the U.S.; political persecution or humanitarian crises; and studying in the U.S.

This recently adopted position will guide our advocacy work on federal legislation introduced on this important public policy issue.

CHANGING FACES OF POWER: WOMEN IN POLITICS

League's *Changing Faces of Power: Women in Politics* event series with the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum in Washington, D.C. was a smashing success!

The League is so proud to have co-hosted these wonderful events – showing that women are playing an increasingly important role in our democracy and making it work for all!

"...Women can make a difference. Why? Because they have to work harder to get there in the first place -- still."

**-Hon. Connie Morella,
former Member of
Congress (R-MD)**

More than 500 women and men from across the United States and abroad came together for this three-part series exploring the hard-fought journey of women through America's political system.

**"What have we learned?
That women are the
Crown Jewel ...We have
the power to decide the
outcome of elections."**

**-Eleanor Clift, Newsweek
Editor and Series
Moderator**

With impressive lineups and expert panelists giving an insider's perspective on the impact of and challenges facing women as voters and activists, candidates, and office holders, the events were met with rave reviews and covered by C-SPAN and XM Satellite Radio.

Moderated by Eleanor Clift, contributing editor at Newsweek, the panels were made up of influential women in politics – including current office holders, past candidates, and idea leaders from the think tank, academic and political arenas – discussing the history, experiences, and trends related to each topic.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Flora Schwartz, 295-1238 • Patricia Sympton, 887-9094
Eleanor Berger, 791-7179 • Marjorie Latz, 561-1526**

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