



League of Women Voters of Brookhaven

# THE VOTER

June 2009

[www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org/brookhaven](http://www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org/brookhaven)

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BROOKHAVEN ANNUAL MEETING

*PROGRAM REPORTS*

*ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS*

*ADOPTION OF BUDGET*

*ADOPTION OF LOCAL PROGRAM*

### REFRESHMENTS

FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 7 PM

AT

Robbie Fishman's

17 Mott Lane, Brookhaven

(to get to Mott Lane from Sunrise Highway at exit 56, go south on Station Road, cross railroad tracks, take next left (Beaver Dam Road) and continue on it, past high school, across South Country Road, to Mott Lane, turn right and travel about 1/2 mile)

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*New York State Government***PRESIDENT'S COLUMN-**

We hope we will see you at our 2009 Annual Meeting on Friday, June 19. It is our chance to meet one another, make suggestions for any new local program for next year and elect the officers and new board members. It is also a time to thank officers or board members who will be leaving their positions.

Our Board members have all worked hard to make the year a successful one, with the help of all those members who served on committees, attended meetings, wrote to their legislators, or showed their support by paying their dues.

Next year promises to be a busy one—we will continue to work with other Leagues in the US on health care and immigration, with other League in NYS on election reform, governmental consolidation, and state reform, and with the other county Leagues on campaign finance, housing, health, and alternatives to incarceration. If you have other ideas, please introduce them at the Annual meeting.

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Paulette Chase-Stony Brook

Panayiota Doering-Setauket

Pauline Dubick-Hazard-East Patchogue

Nancy Whitney -Stony Brook

Judith Simon -Stony Brook

**ARE YOU A LEAGUE MEMBER?**

We mail the VOTERS to all our members, advertisers, and public officials. We also mail to prospective members, as an invitation to our program. If you wish to join, please call Nancy Marr, 730-6556, or find our application on [www.lwv-suffolkcounty/brookhaven.htm](http://www.lwv-suffolkcounty/brookhaven.htm)

## FROM THE NEW YORK STATE LWV CONVENTION—A New Study

At the 53rd Biennial Convention, the delegates adopted a new study of up to two years on the consolidation of governmental units and the sharing of governmental services. A Committee is being formed and more information will be available shortly. Justification for the study is below.

Few areas are more ripe for reform, difficult to understand, or emotional in the opposition they evoke than government consolidation. New York State has among the highest local property taxes in the nation and among the largest number of governmental units. It has also had numerous commissions and other bodies appointed to study the issue, most of which have supported consolidation of one degree or another. The Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness (Lundine Commission) was established in April 2007 to examine ways to strengthen and streamline local government, reduce costs and improve effectiveness, maximize informed participation in local elections, and facilitate shared services, consolidation and regional governance. Last year, it issued its final report, which concluded that major efficiencies could be recognized by consolidation of certain governmental units and consolidation of services on a multi-governmental basis.

While consolidation is not and cannot be the magic bullet that does away with all local taxes, when entered in a thoughtful manner, it has the potential to make government more efficient and effective. Much as we hope for messianic measures in coming to grips with the cost of contemporary government, the reality may be that much more can be achieved by the quiet tinkering around the edges that can result in minor savings here and there.

In its introduction, the Lundine Commission noted:

The vast majority of our municipalities were established and their boundaries set during the horse-and-buggy era. There are also outdated laws and offices for which no modern rationale exists. Over the years we have added to this outdated system, but rarely simplified, and today we have nearly 5,000 local government entities.

While the constant review of what works and what does not is the hallmark of a well-run entity, New York State has major constitutional and legislative impediments that makes change difficult or impossible to implement.

(for more information, see [LWVNY.org](http://LWVNY.org))

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### IN HONOR OF ALLAN ARONOFF

The Suffolk County Anti-Bias Task Force has created a new award, named for Allan Aronoff, on Wednesday, June 10, 8:30 am in the Media Center at the Dennison Building. It will be an annual award, and this year is being given to Nayyar Imam. Allan was an active member of the Task Force.

## Statement by Mary Wilson, President, LWV-US

Dear League Leaders:

As the LWVUS Board members and I have talked with members at State League Conventions, we have realized that our previous statements about the current LWVUS advocacy approach to health care reform have not been as clear as they could have been. Let me clarify the issue.

First, the LWVUS health care position has not changed. The League favors universal health care to be provided through a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums, commonly known as the "single payer" approach. But, the League's position is much more expansive than just favoring the single payer approach. As shown by our position, we are concerned that health care reform include basic health care for everyone (currently at least 40 million people in this country do not have health care coverage); we support cost control measures; we believe in equitable provision of health services; etc. And, even when the position was adopted in 1993, League members recognized that it could take several phases before we reached a single payer system. "As the United States moves toward a national health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League."

Other than the recent hard-fought expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program which provides coverage for low-income children who are not eligible for Medicaid, we now have the first serious opportunity in 15 years to make major reforms in the way health care is delivered in this country. We have the first ever opportunity to achieve universal health care coverage. Indeed several of the proposals currently being seriously discussed in Congress and by the Administration are also giant steps forward towards ultimately achieving a government-funded national health

insurance plan: Yes, "single payer" bills have been introduced in this Congress. But, the fact is that for economic and political reasons, now is not the time to be able to achieve single payer health care reform - the Administration is not supporting moving to it at the present time and even members of Congress who signed onto single payer bills last session recognize that it has no chance for passage this session. Therefore, the LWVUS Board has chosen to take an advocacy strategy at this time that will take advantage of the opportunity to make real strides in those parts of our position that are key building blocks for when the time is right for the single payer approach: supporting coverage for everyone that includes the prevention of disease, primary care, acute care, long-term care, mental health care, and prescription drug coverage, and allows for pre-existing conditions; computerization of medical records; a system-wide program to coordinate information and establish best practices including providing comparative data on treatments and medical outcomes; cost containment measures; etc. We know we can make advances in these areas and, in order to have our voice taken seriously, we cannot couple our message on these important issues with lobbying actively at this time for the single payer approach.

The fact that the LWVUS is using this advocacy strategy at this time at the national level does not mean that state Leagues cannot use the national position to lobby their state legislatures for a single payer approach in their states. The restriction on lobbying for a nationwide single payer approach at this time is only on lobbying members of the United States House and Senate and the Obama administration. Likewise, state and local Leagues may sponsor educational forums that include discussions of the single payer approach.

In League, Mary Wilson



**George R. Rehn**

Certified Public Accountant

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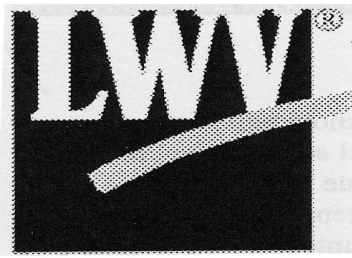
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## COUNTY LEGISLATOR BEEDENBENDER REPORTS ON TRANSPORTATION

At our May meeting, we met with Brian Beedenbender, Legislator for the Fourth District, and Chairman of Suffolk County's Public Works and Transportation Committee. He is optimistic that the stimulus money coming to the county will assist with infrastructural improvements. Work on bridges and oads in Suffolk County (Commack Road, service roads for the LIE, Route 112, for instance) will all be covered by the stimulus money from the Federal Government, as will some of the sewer work at SUNY in Stony Brook.

As we heard previously, the Suffolk County Transportation Department has been doing a study of the county's public transportation, and it is coming to a conclusion. It will help to better coordinate and plan the various bus routes, and will add some new ones and remove some that were not well utilized. Efforts to add Sunday buses have not been successful, due to the cost and the amount of subsidy that would be required from the county unless the charges to the rider increase. Since bus riders need to take buses, Legislator Beedenbender believes that we should not increase the fares, which will put the Sunday buses on hold for now. It has been proposed that the MTA take over the Suffolk system, which might make it possible to add Sundays buses, but would probably increase the cost to the rider. In addition, it would make it harder to make adjustments to the system to make it run more efficiently.

The Committee is looking at better ways to learn about problems when they happen so that they can be resolved more quickly, and hopes the Transportation Advisory Committee will help in this respect. He described a system where riders could contact a central office when buses were late or there were other problems, and help could be immediately provided. A transit hub (combining buses and trains) is also under consideration, possibly in Brentwood. The members asked questions about graduated pricing, distance between stops, and bus stops in shopping malls. We appreciated his presentation, and enjoyed his thorough and thoughtful information.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF  
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DATES TO REMEMBER

JUNE

- Wed June 10 Anti-bias Task Force Award in memory of Allan Aronoff, 8:30 am, Dennison Building, Hauppauge
- Wed June 17 Suffolk County LWV Board Meeting, Riverhead Library, 10-1
- Fri June 19 **LWV OF BROOKHAVEN ANNUAL MEETING, Robbie Fishman's, 7 pm**

*JULY AND AUGUST— DO YOU WANT TO HELP PLAN A SUMMER EVENT?  
CALL ROBBIE FISHMAN, 286-0614*

AUGUST

- Wed Aug 19 Summer Planning Meeting, 5-8 pm, ptba

SEPTEMBER

- Mon Sep 21 General Meeting, Comsewogue Library, 7:30 pm