

League of Women Voters of Brookhaven

# THE VOTER

September 2009

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

## HEALTH CARE REFORM WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH IT?

Discussion on the issues facing Congress  
and the President  
in the reform of health care

- the health insurance exchange
- the public health insurance option
- non-profit cooperatives and the trigger
  - affordability credits
  - incentives for cost-containment

Monday, September 21, 7:15 pm  
Middle Country Library, Kroog Room  
101 Eastwood Boulevard  
Centereach

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**PRESIDENT'S COLUMN-** We hope you had a good summer—full of good books, fine swimming, excellent friends and family. But you probably had what most of us did—not enough time to read, weather not good for swimming, and too much time spent catching up on the news from Washington and around the world.

Now that fall is here, we look forward to continuing our efforts to register and inform voters, study and advocate in the areas of health reform, transportation, housing, energy savings and environmental protection, and follow the actions of our local governments. We hope you will join us (see the calendar enclosed) .

Don't forget to save the date for our UN Dinner, Friday, October 23, at Alice D'Amico's, always a n evening with good food and conversation..

**CONGRESSMAN BISHOP'S HEALTH FORUM**

Six League members from three Leagues were pleased to assist Congressman Bishop with his Town Meeting on August 27. We collected question cards from the audience and selected 30 cards that Bishop could answer—trying to balance the pros and cons, and hitting all the major issues. The Congressman did an excellent job answering them, and the crowd was kept relatively calm by Judge Andrea Schiavoni, who was the moderator. It was a chance to bring everyone together to hear one another and to hear what the bills really include. Despite a lot of rudeness and anger, we learned a lot and applaud the Congressman for making himself available.

Unfortunately, at least 500 people could not get into the crowded hall, including many League members. A good deal of very helpful information about the health bills are on Bishop's website, including a link to the House bill HR3200. By the time of our meeting, we expect there may be more information from the Senate.

## HEALTH CARE REFORM DEFINITIONS

### Health Insurance Exchange (HR 3200 as of 8/27/09)

- A marketplace for individuals and small employers to comparison shop
- All insurance companies participating must offer a new essential benefit package (to be defined by new Advisory Board)
- This basic package will include preventive services with no cost sharing, mental health services, oral health and vision for children, and caps the amount of money a person or family spends in a year.
- More comprehensive packages may be offered in addition.

### Public health insurance option (HR 3200 as of 8/27/09)

- Will be available only through the Health Insurance exchange.
- To be financed only by its premiums
- Will operate on a level playing field -subject to same conditions as private insurance companies and financed only by its premiums
- Can negotiate drug prices

### Affordability credits

- Available to low and moderate income individuals and families—on a sliding scale until income reaches 400 %of the federal poverty level (\$88,000 for a family of 4)
- To be administered by the Exchange in coordination with other federal and State entities, such as Social Security and Medicaid
- Will expand Medicaid with federal dollars, and will fill the donut hole in Medicare

### Non-profit Cooperatives (not yet introduced, but is expected in Senate Finance Committee bill—watch for this)

### Cost containment

- Will reduce costs by strengthening prevention, primary care
- Will reform the health care delivery system
- Improvements in payment accuracy and reforms to Medicare and Medicaid

# Suffolk County Voter

Katherine Hoak, Nancy Marr, Renee Stahlman, and Judie Gorenstein hosted the LWVSC table at the second annual *Stand Up For The Homeless* at St. Joseph's College in Patchogue on August 5. The goal was for the 554 homeless to gain access to services from 71 federal, state, county, and private agencies. LWVSC distributed voter registration forms and helped 12 people complete the forms that day, and provided "Your Right to Vote in New York State: Homeless Individuals" booklets to the homeless, the volunteers who escorted them, and other agencies.

At last year's event, most of the people were surprised to find out that the homeless could indeed vote. This year I was gratified to see that more people were aware of this right and knowledgeable as to voting regulations. Many of the people did know they had to re-register if they changed addresses. Some who said they were not registered at their current shelter but knew they would be moving in in a few weeks, asked to take the forms and fill them out once they got to their new address. They had voted in the past and planned on voting this year too. They recognized that although they might not have a home, they do have a vote; and their vote can make a difference.

The Ballot Marking Devices located in each polling site also can make a difference. I spoke with a blind man who had voted in 2008 with the ballot marking device. It was the very first time he has voted independently and he is encouraging others with disabilities to use them. I knew it was important for people with disabilities to vote independently, but this blind man reaffirmed how much it meant to him.

Our league's presence at this event also meant a lot to a convicted felon who had served his parole 10 years ago. He had voted before he was convicted, but was unaware he could vote again. No one had ever told him, his volunteer (or many other people there that day), that felons after serving parole were entitled to vote but needed to register. He regretted not having known and voted in the past ten years, did complete the registration form right there, and seemed certain to vote this year and in the future.

LWVSC will certainly continue to volunteer at this event and others like it where we can help register voters and inform them of their rights. For those who have not seen the "Your Right to Vote in New York State: Homeless Individuals" "...Convicted Felons," etc., go to <http://lwvny.org/voteServices.html#right>

*Judie Gorenstein*

## Grant Writing Seminar

The CJCC (Criminal Justice Coordinating Council) will hold a 3-hour introduction to grant writing for anyone interested in learning about the grant writing process. The seminar will be held on Thursday, September 17, from 9am-12noon in the Media Room of the H. Lee Dennison Building in Hauppauge.

The purpose of this grant writing seminar is to introduce participants to the process of submitting a grant proposal or responding to an RFP (request for proposals). This seminar will review the components of a successful grant proposal and help participants to understand the specific components of a proposal. This seminar will review the problem statement, goals and objectives, activities, evaluation, budget, and capability statements of a proposal.

This is best attended by those who are not experienced in grant writing and want to learn more about the process. More advanced grant writing sessions can be scheduled if needed. *Please advise Katherine Hoak (667-8745) if you wish to attend.*

<b>LWV BROOKHAVEN - 2009-2010</b>				
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	<b>OCTOBER</b>	<b>NOVEMBER</b>	<b>DECEMBER</b>	<b>JANUARY</b>
No Board Meeting	10/7 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Renee's	11/4 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Linda's	12/2 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Nancy's	1/6 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Betsy's
9/12-9/13 Brookhaven Town Fair Smith Road, Yaphank		11/23 1:30 p.m. Bellport N.Y.S. Government Reform	<b>NATIONAL ITEM PLANNING</b> 12/5 10:00 a.m. Ruth Regan's 12/10 7:30 p.m. Lea Becker's	1/25 1:30 p.m. Comsewogue Topic: Housing/Smart Growth (Yaphank/Housing Authority)
9/21 7:30 p.m. Middle Ctry (Centereach) Topic: Health Care Reform	10/23 - 7:00 p.m. U.N.DINNER ALICE D'AMICO'S	11/3 ELECTION DAY 11/8 10:30 Bellport Country Club SC LWV Post Election Brunch		
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<b>MARCH</b>	<b>APRIL</b>	<b>MAY</b>	<b>JUNE</b>
2/3 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Robbie's	3/3 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Alice's	4/7 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Paulette's	5/5 2:00 p.m. Bd Mtg-Edy's	6/2 2:00 Bd Mtg-PTBA
2/22 1:30 p.m. Bellport Topic: South Shore Estuary	3/22 1:30 p.m. Comsewogue Topic: Transportation	4/17 12 noon -Place TBA ANNUAL LUNCHEON	5/24 7:30 p.m. Comsewogue Topic: Immigration	6/23 7:00 p.m. LWVB ANNUAL MTG-Place TBA
			SCLWV ANNUAL CONV Bellport Country Club	
Board meetings are open to any member. Board members host the meetings.				
Our UN Dinner is open to all members and their guests. Call Alice at 751-0328 for reservation.				
Unless otherwise indicated, the meeting will be held in one of these libraries:				
Comsewogue Library - 170 Terryville Road, Port Jefferson Station - north of Nesconset Highway, .5 miles west of Route 112				
Middle Country Library - Centereach - 101 Eastwood Boulevard, north of Middle Country Road, .6 miles west of Nicolls Road				
Bellport Library - Bellport - 22 Station Road (just north of South Country Road)				

## HEALTH MEETING SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 21

Our committee has been studying the many aspects of health reform being considered by the House and Senate, and we look forward to providing information to League members that we hope will be informative, interesting, and clarifying and that will form the basis of a discussion of the pros and cons, and what to do next.

The meeting, on September 21 at the Middle Country Library in Centereach is scheduled for 7:15 to permit people to have a cup of coffee before our starting time of 7:30, to allow us as much time as possible before closing time of 8:45. We are not publicizing the meeting for the general public; the room is small and we are really interested in a discussion by our League members.

## STATEMENT ON SENATE RULES CHANGES — NEW RULES A SOLID IMPROVEMENT

*Too soon to retire dysfunctional label, groups say, but a strong step forward.*

Our groups believe that the rules changes adopted last night include changes that will make the State Senate more open and accountable, but do not go far enough to improve the arcane internal operations of the Senate. For example, the new rules provide for:

Greater transparency of Senate proceedings: All hearings of Senate standing committees and meetings shall be recorded and posted on the website within twenty-four hours, and webcast when practicable. This means citizens throughout the state will no longer need to trek up to Albany to follow the votes on issues they feel passionate about. Committee voting records and reports will be available online for the first time in a searchable database. When this is implemented, it will be one of the most significant improvements to legislative transparency in years.

Motions and petitions for chamber consideration: A majority of Senators can move a bill from the calendar to the active list after aging for four days, and three-fifths of the full Senate can move a bill from committee to the active list. Unfortunately, it appears these new rules do away with motions to discharge. We believe that a majority of members should continue to be able to move a bill out of a committee rather than three-fifths of members. The net effect of these changes, however, is an increase in the power of rank-and-file Senators.

C-SPAN: A joint advisory board appointed by the leaders of the two houses will report on how to expand the state's current television offerings. An improved television network will make it much easier for active citizens to follow their government.

Committee hearing process: The new rules attempt to bolster the committee process through increased oversight and hearings. We support the change allowing members to call for hearings on bills by a vote of one-third of the committee and the holding of statewide regional budget hearings from October to December to discuss the impacts of the state budget on the community.

While these are important improvements, the rules codify an inequitable distribution of resources between the two conferences. In particular, the majority party's central staff allocation will be twice that of the minority party. Additionally the rules require a base allocation for all Senators' staff—representing a small fraction of the legislative body's overall budget. There is also no specificity with regard to the distribution of general resources, such as those to be spent on office supplies and com-



**George R. Rehn**

Certified Public Accountant

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puters, except that such resources will be distributed "equitably."

The rules also provide for the inequitable allocation of member items. While the minimum 2:1 ratio for the portion received by the two conferences is a significant improvement above the historic 10:1 allocation, this is the first time the unfair distribution process has been codified. Voters will go to the polls knowing that their communities will be punished if they vote for the "wrong" Senate candidate. Additionally, nothing prevents party leaders from punishing insubordinate members by decreasing the amount they receive. We believe that there is no justifiable reason why every Senator should not be guaranteed equal access to community improvement funds.

Finally, the groups point out that these advances were negotiated by leadership behind closed doors, ending ultimately with a floor vote at 3:30 a.m. on Thursday. The way these rules reforms came to pass is an unfortunate indication that the Senate, while making laudable and historic reforms, has not yet fully matured beyond its dysfunctional phase.

Additionally, while the committees' proceedings will now be available online and there are more opportunities for public hearings, the numerous recommendations our groups have made to reinvigorate the committees, including prohibiting "ghost voting," and requiring substantive committee reports and fiscal notes for bills that move through committee have not yet been implemented. It appears that the Committees' budgets, agenda and most of the staff remain controlled by the leadership. The Temporary Senate Committee on Rules and Administration reform is now "directed to make specific recommendations for revising the Senate Rules and the Legislative Law" to improve the committee process by December 1st. This is not the first time we have heard a promise to reform this vital area, but we hope that the remaining necessary changes will finally come from this report.

We congratulate the members for this historic reforms. We would particularly like to thank Senators Bonacic, Squadron, and Schneiderman for their recent leadership on this issue. Finally, we look forward to the implementation of addition reforms in the near future, particularly regarding resource allocation.

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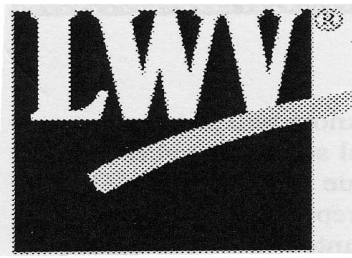
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DATES TO REMEMBER

SEPTEMBER

- |         |            |  |
|---------|------------|--|
| Sat-Sun | Sept 12-13 | Brookhaven Town Fair, Smith and Longwood Roads, Yaphank      |
| Wed     | Sept 16    | Suffolk County LWV Board Meeting, Riverhead Library, 10 am   |
| Mon     | Sept 21    | HEALTH CARE REFORM, Middle Country Library, Kroog Room, 7:15 |

OCTOBER

- |     |        |  |
|-----|--------|--|
| Wed | Oct 7  | Brookhaven LWV Board meeting, Renee Stahlman's, 2 pm       |
| Wed | Oct 21 | Suffolk County LWV Board Meeting, Riverhead Library, 10 am |
| Fri | Oct 23 | United Nations Dinner, Alice d'Amico's, 7 pm               |

Directions to Middle Country Library—from Nicolls Road, exit at Route 25 and go west 6/10 mile to Eastwood Boulevard (there is a light and a bank on the corner) - turn north (right) and go 4/10 mile to the library. The meeting is in the Kroog Room, off the children's section.