



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

LWV of East Nassau

Voter

*At local, state and national levels
the League works to influence public policy
through education and advocacy.*

March, 2010

Save the Dates

March is Women's History Month

Wednesday, Mar. 17 – 1:30 PM
LWVEN General Meeting
Consolidation /Dissolution of
Government Entities
Levittown Library

Thursday, March 18 - 6:30 PM
LWVNC Women's History Dinner
See column to the right.

Saturday, March 20 – 8AM – 3PM
S.T.O.P. Day at Eisenhower Park,
Parking Field 3, East Meadow

Wednesday, April 7 – 7:30 PM
LWVEN Board Meeting
Levittown Library

Wednesday, April 21 – 7:30 PM
Showing of film, "The Last Fix"
Speaker: Jacqui Lofaro, Co-
Producer and Director of film.
Levittown Library

I would like to attend the LWVNC
Women's History Celebration &
Dinner. Enclosed is my check for
_____, for _____ persons.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Please make check payable to:
League of Women Voters of Nassau County.

Mail to: LWVNC, PO Box 539, Point
Lookout, NY 11569 (431-1628 for information)

The League of Women Voters of Nassau County
Invites You to a Grand Celebration of

Women's History Month

The 90th Birthday of the League of Women Voters, and
The 90th anniversary of the Passage of the 19th Amendment

Thursday, March 18, 2010

Pompei Restaurant,
401 Hempstead Avenue, West Hempstead, 516-485-8620
6:30 PM – 10:30 PM

Join us for Dinner and a Dramatic Presentation
Starring League Members...

The voices of the suffragists
The conflicts which drove them apart
The issues which brought them together

Dinner: \$45.00 (At the door: \$50.00)

Come One, Come All!

LWVEN General Meeting

March 17th, at 7:30 PM, at the Levittown Library.

We will be discussing the **NYS Government Consolidation/ Shared Services State League Study** and the recent state legislation that could have significant impact on the future of the special districts, towns and villages in the county and the rest of the state.

It is important that the Leagues in Nassau County have a voice in the ultimate positions taken by the LWV of NYS on this important issue. See pages 4 and 7 for information on the new state law.

See page 8 for information on LWVNS plans for a Spring Fling Weekend in NYC, including cocktail party, tours, theatre, etc. – May 14 – 16.

League of Women Voters® of East Nassau

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Mary Price, Circulation
Lesley Pollak, Advertising

County Legislature Meeting Schedule

Monday, Mar. 8	10:00 AM
Monday, Mar. 22	10:00 AM
Monday, April 19	10:00 AM

The Nassau County Legislature meets in the Legislative Chamber, 1st floor, 1550 Franklin Ave, Mineola, 571-4252. An admittance pass must be obtained. Call for scheduled committee meeting dates and times.

Town of Hempstead Meeting Schedule

Tuesday, Mar. 9	10:30 AM
Tuesday, Mar. 23	7:00 PM
Tuesday, Apr. 13	10:30 AM

The Hempstead Town Board meets at Town Hall, in the Nathan H. Bennett Pavilion, 489-5000.

Town of Oyster Bay Meeting Schedule

Tuesday, Mar. 9	10:00 AM
Tuesday, Mar. 23	10:00 AM
Tuesday, Apr. 13	10:00 AM

The Oyster Bay Town Board meets at 54 Audrey Ave., Oyster Bay, 624-6390.

**Call before
attending.
Schedules
are subject
to change.**



LWVEN Board of Directors – 2008-2009

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Executive VP & Judicial

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Voter Service & HAVA: Norma Schaeffer 489-3133

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Students Inside Albany: Judy Schecter 221-5448

At Large: Mimi Hirsch 822-5086

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Keeping Connected

LWVUS & LWVUS Education Fund

1730 M Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20036-4508
 202-429-1965, www.lwv.org, lwv@lwv.org

LWVNYS & LWVNYS Education Foundation

62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207
 518-465-4162, www.lwvny.org, lwvny@lwvny.org, www.lwvny-bulletins.org

LWV of Nassau County:

Post Office Box 539, Point Lookout, NY 11569, 516-431-1628
www.lwvofnassaucounty.org, vote@lwvofnassaucounty.org



Barbara's Corner

I'm sure you were as impressed as I was when you received the beautiful invitation to the Nassau County League's March 18, 2010 celebration of the 90th anniversary of the LWV of the United States, and the passage of the 19th amendment. A large turnout by East Nassau members is anticipated (some are even participating in a special dramatic presentation). Hope to see you there!

In League, we like to think of ourselves as an extended family. How deeply saddened we are by the loss of Shirlee Bergman, an integral part of our League family.

In Memory of Shirlee Bergman

Shirlee Bergman was a woman of great strength, warmth, compassion and intelligence. She was fiercely loyal to her family and friends. Her young great-grandchildren were the joy of her life. She and her beloved sister Bobby Stim were a life-long duo of devotion, support, and friendship, sharing common interests and activities.

Shirlee loved to travel, was an avid theatre goer and enjoyed playing games. For many years she was a volunteer at Channel 21, and more recently served most efficiently as secretary of the League of Women Voters of East Nassau.

Shirlee was a gracious hostess and delighted everyone with her delicious home baked coffee cake. She so enjoyed being among people and people derived pleasure being with her. Her life was rich with family, friends and interests. She will be deeply missed by all who had the good fortune to have known her. A celebration of Shirlee's life will take place in the spring.

For Leaguers Who Are Not Computer-Challenged

The LWVNYS has just launched a blog on New York State politics, thanks to Jay Gallagher, retired Albany Bureau Chief for Gannett News. Jay will be writing about Albany happenings and posting his stories on our blog. You can read the blog simply by visiting the site, <http://lwvny-blog.blogspot.com>.

The NYS League has provided a link to the blog from their website (lwvny.org). Look for the link in the top right corner of the header. If you would like to comment on a blog, you have to "sign in" on the blog website. Spread the word and watch for new blog entries!

Center for Restorative Practices (Suffolk County)



The philosophy of the Center for Restorative Practices has its roots in a worldwide movement to change the way justice is understood and practiced. It has been inspired by long standing indigenous problem-solving practices of many pre-industrial societies across the planet, from the Maori of New Zealand to the First Nations of Canada.

Restorative justice is an emerging philosophy and a field of practice for addressing criminal behavior, delinquency, family dysfunction, and community conflict.

It combines in practice some of the best thinking about justice, about psychological trauma and emotional healing, and about effective and democratic communication and decision making at the face-to-face level. In schools, it includes activities that not only respond to wrongdoing but also work preemptively to build a sense of belonging and a feeling of mutual responsibility among students and staff within the school community.

The League of Women Voters of Suffolk County first became aware of restorative justice at a meeting with Judge Madeleine Fitzgibbon in November 2007. Since then, in keeping with support for our position in support of alternatives to incarceration, we presented a series of four seminars for school administrators in Suffolk County in 2008, to present restorative practices and to determine whether the administrators wanted to bring it to their schools or districts.

The Center for Restorative Practices has become an agency with significant support, along with that of the League. It is now headquartered within the Public Advocacy Center in Touro Law Center in Central Islip, located next door to the SC Family Court and the Supreme Court. It has access to a pool of Touro student interns who promise to benefit its work. The Center works to reform and accomplish long-term systemic change within the juvenile justice system in Suffolk County by teaching and training school administrators, alternative methods for suspension and expulsion, and by conducting forums for faith-based communities, police departments and probation officers to teach restorative justice philosophy and practices.

The LWVSC Board plans to... further familiarize itself with the scope and importance of the work being done and planned at the Center by its most-committed Director, Carol McNally.

Katherine Hoak, Co-President, LWV of Suffolk County

Observations on:

The New NYS Law on Reorganizing Local Governments By Marie Bellon

The New NY Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act, which takes effect on March 21, 2010, establishes a comprehensive procedure to consolidate or dissolve several kinds of local government entities: towns, villages, and special districts including fire, fire protection, fire alarm, water, garbage, sewer, parks, special improvement or other improvement districts, library districts and other districts created by law. The law does not include school, city or special purpose districts created by counties under county law.

Special districts and villages were created by town boards or by petition of residents to address increased residential needs brought on by suburban growth that were not necessarily being addressed on a town-wide basis. Recently, however, media coverage of some local government entities has raised concerns over the lack of transparency, oversight, accountability and the potential for abuse of tax revenue.

Governor David A. Paterson heralded this new law as “empowering citizens” and as a vehicle to reduce property taxes by consolidating or dissolving local government entities.

Whether or not the new law fully accomplishes these aims is arguable. For example, it should be noted that the procedure for consolidation or dissolution is more easily accomplished when those actions are initiated by government. When voters initiate the action, the process is more cumbersome and the requirements more strenuous. In addition, voter approval is something not permitted for certain consolidations or dissolutions, such as when special districts are involved.

As for reducing property taxes, this law does not necessarily apply to the greatest portion of the property tax bill. According to one report, the law applies to only 12% of the total property tax bill with the greater tax revenue going to schools and the county government.

This law provides two paths for consolidation or dissolution: The Government Board-Initiated process and the Voter-Initiated process. The law also amends the NYS Municipal Home Rule Law providing for how counties can abolish local governments. The following is a description of how the law works and how it impacts voters.

The Government Board-Initiated Consolidation or Dissolution Process

In this process a local governing body may endorse a resolution to either consolidate or dissolve certain local government entities. The next step is to develop a plan, present it to the public and conduct hearings. After the final hearing(s) the governing body may amend and re-

submit the amended plan to the public and hold additional hearings. For towns and villages a referendum on the plan is held and the plan is either accepted or rejected. For special districts there is no provision for a referendum to vote to accept or reject the plan. The law stipulates that after the final hearings the governing body alone can decide to consolidate or dissolve special districts.

Thus, the law denies voters in special districts the right to vote to accept or reject a plan which, in most cases, will significantly affect how services are provided in their local community. [*§752(2)*], [*§778*]

The Voter-Initiated Consolidation or Dissolution Process

In this process, the law provides a mechanism for voters to petition for a public vote on either consolidating or dissolving their local governments. [*§757*], [*§779*]. The law imposes no time limits on organizers to gather the petition signatures, nor does the law require that the organizers be voters in the affected government entity. Thus, for example, an organizer who lives outside the affected area can theoretically take as long as needed, conceivably years, to gather the signatures of registered voters in the affected area.

The law also states that only 10% of registered voters, or 5,000, in the affected government entity need sign the petition to either consolidate or dissolve, or, if a government entity has less than 500 registered voters, then 20% is required. Therefore if an entity has 500 registered voters, 100 signatures would be required, whereas, if there are 600 registered voters in the affected entity, the law requires 60 signatures. [*§757(1)(2)*], [*§779(2)*].

Once the petition to consolidate or dissolve contains the minimum number of signatures, it is submitted to the appropriate clerk (i.e. town or village). The clerk is allowed only ten days to validate the signatures. Can signatures be validated within the restricted time of 10 days, especially if signatures were gathered over an unlimited period of time?

After signature validation, a resolution is adopted calling for a referendum. The law requires a referendum take place within the brief time span of 60-90 days. [*§758(1)*] [*§780(1)*]. Before the referendum vote, the resolution must be announced to the public, a summary must be published and hearings must be held. Question: Is this time frame sufficient to properly advise the public and conduct a referendum?

Continued on page 7

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In addition, this referendum is restricted to the question of whether to either consolidate or dissolve a town, village or special district. This referendum is not a vote on an actual plan setting forth the new operational framework and projecting expected tax and service benefits. The referendum is restricted to a “yes” or “no” vote on the question of either to consolidate or dissolve.

With passage of the referendum, governing bodies have 180 days to develop and approve a plan that will describe the complex actions needed. Some question whether 180 days is a sufficient period of time to tackle involved issues such as, territorial boundaries, personnel requirements, assets and liabilities, infrastructure and environmental considerations. [*§760(1)*], [*§785(2)*].

At the end of the 180 days, after the governing board has adopted their plan, it is made available to the public through notices and public hearings. Forty-five days after the final hearing, either consolidation or dissolution automatically occurs. [*§763(1)*], [*§785(1)*]. No referendum is held. For dissatisfied voters, the only recourse is to gather the signatures necessary to file a petition for a Permissive Referendum.

Signature requirements for a Permissive Referendum increase to 25% of registered voters, or 15,000, -- *which is greater than the 10% and 5,000 required to initiate the process* – and, the signatures must be collected and petition submitted for validation within 45 days after the governing body approved the final plan – *versus the unlimited time allowed to collect and submit signatures for the petition to initiate consolidation or dissolution.* [*§763(2)*], [*§785(2)*].

Therefore, if voters, even those who supported a change, do not like the government plan this process has produced, their government entity (*town, village or special district*) faces automatic consolidation or dissolution, unless they, the voters, succeed in overcoming the huge hurdle of a Permissive Referendum. This law, in effect, provides for consolidation or dissolution by default.

Amendment to Allow Counties to Abolish Units of Government

Counties already had the power to transfer functions or duties of one local government within the county to another local government. This new law amends Section 33-a of the Municipal Home Rule Law granting the board of supervisors or the legislature of any county the power to abolish any units of local government wholly contained in the county.

The units can include whole cities, towns, villages or districts, or the offices, departments or agencies within

those local governments. In order to transfer or abolish one or more government units, or transfer the functions of one or more government units, the law provides that a referendum must be held and approved by:

- a) A majority of county voters who live in the cities;
- b) A majority of county voters who do not live in a city, and
- c) If the local law affects the functions or duties of one or more villages, then by a majority of county voters living in the affected villages considered as one unit.

This new law adds the power to abolish government units to The Municipal Home Rule Law but leaves in place the restrictions on referendums for villages and special districts.

For villages, the law requires approval by a majority of the total votes cast in all the villages, not a majority of the votes cast within each village. For example, if the vote is to abolish certain villages, and some of those villages vote against being abolished, but the total vote of all the villages taken together is to abolish, then the majority vote overrules the wishes of the dissenting villages.

For special districts majority vote requirements are not mentioned in the law. By omission, the law seemingly ignores the rights of the voters in special districts by permitting a majority vote in the entire county to determine the fate of special districts.

In reviewing this law, some organizations, associations and individuals have expressed concern over provisions which may have unintended consequences or may spark legal challenges. To address some important and troublesome provisions, amendments have been suggested. They include:

1. Clarify the time-frame in the signature-gathering processes;
2. Increase signature thresholds;
3. Lengthen the time-frame for a study;
4. Conduct a study before referendum;
5. Eliminate the Permissive Referendum and require mandatory referendums allowing voters to accept or reject any plan to consolidate, dissolve, abolish or transfer functions of their local government entity

Citations from: “*The New NY Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act. June 2009*”

Bellon: Board member of *The League of Women Voters of Port Washington-Manhasset*. Served multiple terms as *President, Vice President, Secretary and Chair of Fund Raising*. Member of *LWVNC Special Districts Study*

Did You Know?

- Since the federal 55 mile/hour speed limit was revoked in 1995, there have been an estimated 12,500 additional deaths due to higher speed limits.
- To find out about the **health of your bank**, you can go to the following site, which analyzes data from the FDIC on hundreds of banks: <http://banktracker.investigativereportingworkshop.org>.
- Cash is no longer accepted in many retail establishments, including some airlines for inflight purchases and some upscale NYC restaurants.
(source: Bottom Line)
- Most states have **passed "Move Over" laws**, which require motorists to "Move Over" and change lanes to give safe clearance to law enforcement officers on roadsides. Many have stiff fines and points for violators. NY, Washington DC, Maryland and Hawaii do not have this law, though these states might pass them as well. More information can be found by going to: **Moveoveramerica.com**. Be forewarned!!

Welcome New
Members

Carol Ludwig
Wantagh

Florence Feldstein
Plainview



League of Women Voters of New York State SPRING FLING WEEKEND IN NEW YORK CITY May 14-16, 2010

Join your League friends for a weekend of activities
in New York City!

Cocktail Part Fundraiser

Friday, May 14, 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Special Honored Guest to be Announced Later

Home of LWVNYS VP for Issues and Advocacy, Sally Robinson
\$50 per person or \$250 Sponsorship (Includes 2 people)

Order Form for Tickets
DUE MARCH 26

Tickets to all tours and theater are limited – and prices are based on required minimum number of participants. Confirmation will be sent out in early April. Credit cards will NOT be charged nor checks deposited until confirmation is received.

Cocktail Party	Friday	_____ No. X \$50
Sponsor of Party	Friday	_____ \$250 (includes 2)
Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island	Saturday	_____ No. X \$20 / \$17.25 (Senior)
King Tut Exhibit	Saturday	_____ No. X \$33.50 / \$31 (Senior)
South Pacific	Saturday	_____ No. X \$60

Additional donation: _____
Can't attend, but I'd like to donate: _____

Total: _____

Check/payment made to the LWVNYS Education Foundation, but only payment over \$25 for Cocktail Party and other donations are tax-deductible.

Name: _____

Billing Address: _____

Credit Card Type (circle one): Visa / Master Card / American Express

Card Number: _____ **Exp:** _____

Send form and check to: LWVNYS, 62 Grand St., Albany, NY 12207
Or, Fax with credit card info to LWVNYS at 518-465-0812
Or, Call with credit card info: 518-465-4162

DUE MARCH 26 – and tickets are limited, so reserve your tickets NOW!

Members are needed to assist in the planning for our candidates' meetings in the Fall. If you are available to help, please contact **Norma Schaeffer** at 489-3133.