

# League of Women Voters

Port Washington-Manhasset Jan-Feb 2010



President Jane Thomas

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## **CITIZENS UNITED DECISION SETS OFF REVOLUTION IN CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

### ***Supreme Court Erred, Decision Un- dermines Basic Pillar of American Democracy***

**Washington, DC** –The following is a statement by Mary G. Wilson, national president of the League of Women Voters on the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*. The League filed an amicus brief in this case:

“The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake. Their decision announced today in *Citizens United v. FEC* is constitutionally irresponsible and will surely bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. Today, basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined – that elections should not be corrupted by vast corporate wealth and that the voters should be at the center of our democratic system.

"Justice Stevens had it right when he said, in his dissent, ‘The Court’s ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.’

“In creating a new constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of their shareholder’s money to determine the outcome in candidate elections, the Court has unleashed into our elections tremendous sums of money from for-profit corporations that cannot possibly be matched in quantity by contributions from ordinary citizens. The only possible outcome of this is that big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy.

## **Message from the President’s Desk**

**Jane Thomas**

“The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake.” These are the words of LWVUS President Mary G. Wilson in a press release on the court’s 5-4 decision on the *Citizens United vs. FEC* case last week that guts all restraints on corporate meddling in our elections. Her statement is published in its entirety in this newsletter. I urge you to follow the ramifications of this decision and what will be done to ameliorate its effects.

This year’s “Lunch With The League” outdid itself. Kudos must go to Amy Bass and Rita Tanski for putting together a flawless program. There were 172 in attendance to hear Jon Kaiman, Town of North Hempstead Supervisor, deliver a précis on our president’s first year and then ask, “So what does all this have to do with us [in North Hempstead]? It has everything to do with us.” See article inside this Newsletter for details on our town’s health status.

We also conducted our yearly “Legislative Lobbying” visits to both Senator Craig Johnson and Assemblyperson Michelle Schimel in January. The State League’s aim of covering ethics in state government as well as campaign finance reform was rolled into one-piece of legislation that passed both houses (with only three nay votes) just prior to our visits. However, it is anyone’s guess if the Governor will sign this bill into law. Stay tuned. The other hot button topic discussed during these visits was the Nassau County League’s study on Special Districts headed up by our own Phoebe Goodman. Both legislators have been sent the three-part findings from this committee. We await their comments.

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**Kaiman’s State of the Town Report**  
by Jane Thomas

Jon Kaiman began his message by re-counting President Obama’s first year’s record. He noted that amid the myriad problems the new president inherited, “the mood of the country is one mired in anger, stress and anxiety while hope falls prey to fear. We are not a patient people.” He concluded on a hopeful note and stated that the economy appears to be coming back and there are “seeds of resolution to enormous problems...” Kaiman stated that residents here, like everywhere, express their frustration “sometimes by voting and sometimes by staying home.” It is up to those who serve in government to listen to those voices: “those that yell, those that reason and those that stand mute.”

Supervisor Kaiman reported that North Hempstead’s finances are solid, our credit rating the highest in town history. The town has avoided layoffs and reduced its work force through attrition.

Mr. Kaiman went on to list the various programs initiated this year: the pharmaceutical return program, the Newcastle revitalization program—with Prospect Avenue reconstruction “beginning as we speak,” and the Platinum LEED Certified Community Center ready for bidding. Plandome Road will soon seeing a half a million dollars in Safe Route’s to School monies.

There will be progress made in our waterways. Mill Pond, Roslyn Pond, Hempstead Harbor, Manhasset Bay and Manhasset Valley Park will all see improvements this year. “Our Housing Authority is making great strides in re-developing its properties on behalf of its residents and our Business and Tourism Development Corporation will be reborn.”

A question was asked about the progress at the Tully Pool. Jon Kaiman explained the extended delays in re-doing this complex but noted that it would be open within the next few months.

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(Message from President, cont. from page 1, col. 2)

In this, its 90<sup>th</sup> year, the League of Women Voters is in great shape. We are as active as ever and are always looking for areas in which we can be helpful players. Speaking of “players” and our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, please plan on celebrating with us at the Nassau County League’s gala event on Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>. Both Judy Epstein and I will be “players” in the performance portion of the evening, reenacting the role of women in the United States since its inception. I hope many of you can attend. Personal invitations are being sent to all League members and will reach you soon.

**Jane**

(Citizens United, cont. from page 1, col. 2)

“Congress and the President enacted campaign finance laws over a series of decades for a reason – to protect our democracy from the perverse influence of big money in our elections. In making this decision, the Court has ignored the best interests of the American public and our representative form of government.”

(State of the Town, cont. from page 2, col. 1)

Kaiman lauded the town’s 311/TownStat program as the one he is “most proud of.” Last year, 311 logged a total of 117,406 requests for service. He also recounted the School Recycling Partnership Program that has supplied 47 buildings in 11 school districts. The Town now picks up recycling materials from 9 of its 11 school districts with over 30,000 students participating.

Lastly, Mr. Kaiman spoke about Project Independence, a pilot program to assist senior citizens, that started in small districts in New Hyde Park and Great Neck. It has now gone town-wide by marrying Project Independence with the town’s 311 system. This support system for senior citizens can address social work services, home visits from visiting nurses, perform blood pressure screenings and provide education programs that address issues such as bereavement, fall prevention and medication management.



## Copenhagen Summit

by Star Anthony

From December 7<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, representatives from 192 countries met in Copenhagen to work on energy and climate issues, to come to an agreement on emissions controls and funding newer technologies. This was the largest climate summit in history.

Thousands of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) were there, representing affected parties all over the world. Some examples are low-lying island countries whose very land is threatened by rising ocean waters, poorer developing nations who need help with growing their energy infrastructure, and a few countries that remain opposed to any restrictions. Tens of thousands of global citizens, environmentalists and activists from around the world also converged in Copenhagen. Emotions ran very high. People around the world were hopeful, looking for some large concrete agreements to come out of the summit.

Many groups expressed disappointment with the resulting accord: the agreement isn't enough to keep the planet's temperature under 2 degrees C., the emission cuts aren't specified, and the commitments aren't legally binding. Those are all true, but don't tell the full story. The accord can be viewed as extremely successful when you consider that the Copenhagen climate deal that President Obama hammered out the last night with the leaders of China, India, Brazil and South Africa broke through years of negotiating gridlock to achieve three critical goals. First, it provides for real cuts in heat-trapping carbon pollution by all of the world's big emitters. Second, it establishes a transparent framework for evaluating countries' performance against their commitments. And third, it will start an unprecedented flow of resources to help poor and vulnerable nations cope with climate impacts, protect their forests, and adopt clean energy technologies.

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## Calendar:

- Wed, Feb. 3:** LWV Board Meeting 9:30 A.M. United Methodist Church
- Mon, Feb.15:** PW/M Public School Recess thru Feb. 20
- Wed, March 3:** LWV Board Meeting 9:30 A.M. United Methodist Church
- Thurs, March 18:** LWV Nassau County 90th Birthday Celebration of the National League of Women Voters; invitations in the mail
- Wed, March 24:** PW Public Library Candidates Meeting-see Newsletter and blue card
- March** ( to be announced): Informational Meeting on NCLWV Study on the Consolidation of Special District Legislation

(Continued from column 1)

Each nation wants to see commitment and action from the others, in order to feel confident when making the difficult changes needed in their own country. For example, other members of the accord want to see the U.S. Senate pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation next year. The odds for Senate action were boosted when President Obama secured both action and transparency from every major industrialized nation. "The United States will pay its fair share ... and other countries will make substantial commitments as well," the White House said. "Providing this assistance is not only a humanitarian imperative — it's an investment in our common security, as no climate change accord can succeed if it does not help all countries reduce their emissions." President Obama was candid on the final night that it is only "a first step". Many observers have noted that the announced commitments are not enough to prevent dangerous climate change. Certainly, more is needed. However minor the targets and policy announcements offered by larger developing countries may appear, they would have been unthinkable a year ago.

As each participating country meets its commitments to work on energy and climate issues, other countries will have the incentive to make further improvements to their own emission controls.



**Save the date - Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**The Nassau County League of Women Voters invites you to a grand three-way celebration:**

- \*Women's History Month**
- \*The 90th Anniversary of the Passage of the 19th Amendment**
- \*The 90th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters**

Join us for dinner and a dramatic presentation starring your sister League members:

- \*the voices of the suffragists**
- \*the issues which brought them together**
- \*the conflicts which drove them apart.**

**Pompei Restaurant  
West Hempstead, New York**

Every member will receive a personal invitation.

**Redistricting Reform:**

**Visions for the Future in NYS**

**Public Forum on the Issue of Redistricting**

**February 9, 2010**

**2:00 pm - 4:00 pm**

**Rockefeller Institute**

**411 State Street, Albany**

**Invited Speakers:**

**Governor David Paterson**

**NYS Legislative Leaders**

**Gerald Benjamin, Associate VP for Regional Engagement,**

**SUNY New Paltz**

**Blair Horner, Legislative Director, NYPIRG**

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**Mission Statement:** *The League of Women Voters is a civic, non-partisan organization dedicated to building citizen participation in the democratic process and to fostering government that is responsive to its citizens. It takes positions on issues but supports no political candidates or parties.*