

THE VOTER

<http://www.lwv-suffolk county.org/brookhaven.htm>

March 2011

League of Women Voters of Brookhaven

THE LAST FIX

A compelling journey with convicted drug offenders who opt for a tough and pioneering drug court on the East End of Long Island rather than prison. It shines a spotlight on alternative sentencing, a seismic shift in the criminal justice system that embraces treatment over punishment.

Monday, March 21, 2:00 pm

Emma Clark Library, Setauket

OR

Wednesday, March 30, 7:00 pm

Bellport Library

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PRESIDENT’S PAGE

At this time, in their effort to find solutions to drastic fiscal problems, our legislators sometimes make decisions that may cause havoc later on. In Suffolk County, in order to be sure that every possible penny is raised by the county health centers, a new directive requires all patients to apply for private insurance or Medicaid, even though they may have been paying a fee all along from their pockets. Our County Health Centers serve many undocumented persons as well as other residents, with the goal of keeping our community healthy. Since undocumented persons may fear exposure, they may not apply for Medicaid and will longer be able to take care of their health under this new plan. Is this what we want? We see the same approach in other areas of budgeting, especially where it serves a political agenda—cutting funds that are called “discretionary” but that are really essential in the long run.

Do we need a “Go Slower” approach, as recommended by the New York State Nurse’s Association about other cuts in state Medicaid, such as medical transportation for the disabled? We already have “Slow Food,” introduced recently by Michael Pollan and other advocates of organic food. And a recent book by Woody Tasch, called “Slow Money” recommends that we begin investing our money in local endeavors that build and sustain a healthy economy. .

DO YOU WANT TO GET YOUR VOTER SOONER?

Members who receive their Voter by email report that they receive it much sooner than when it comes in the mail. Not surprising, but the mail sometimes takes particularly long. If you want your copy more quickly, send me your email address and we will oblige.

SAVE THE DATE—ANNUAL LUNCHEON

We will be holding our Annual Luncheon at noon on Saturday, April 16, at The Fifth Season, across the street from Danforth’s in Port Jefferson.

WE EXTEND OUR SYMPATHIES TO JAPAN

Watching the devastation in Japan this weekend, we realize how critical the issues around global warming, homeland safety, and preservation of the environment are. In May, we plan a meeting to discuss the Carman’s River Study and land use in Brookhaven.

Report on Transportation Meeting

February 28, 2011

Speaker: Adam Gaus – Suffolk County LWV Transportation Chair

Economists state that to have a strong economy you need two major factors; a good communications system and a good transportation system to move workers and goods. Communications are not a problem, but efficient, accessible transportation is a major problem for Long Island.

As an engineer and a pilot, Adam Gaus brings a broad outlook to his position as Suffolk County LWV Transportation Chair. Adam started his presentation by noting that east-west traffic cameras with strobe lights have been installed at at least four intersections on Route 347. Cameras have been installed at the intersection of Route 347 and Nicolls Rd in all directions as well as at several Rte 347 intersections to the East. Adam also brought us up-to-date on the construction plans for Route 347.

Below are two Internet links, one giving information on the Suffolk County Bus routes and the second with information on the construction currently in progress for Route 347 from the split of Routes 347 (Smithtown ByPass/Nesconset Highway) and 454 (Veterans Memorial Highway) to Route 111.

Bus map - <http://www.sct-bus.org/images/stsystemmap.pdf>

Route 347 news - <https://www.nysdot.gov/regional-offices/region10/projects/ny-347/news>

If you check out the website you will see that there will be 3 lanes in each direction. Construction will be done in 10 sections, not all of them sequentially. There will be bridges, including Jericho Turnpike (Rte 25) and Nicolls, Rd. The budget problems besetting New York State and the Federal government may slow down construction.

Suffolk County Long Island is in a unique situation. We have 1.5 million people situated in 1000 square miles, more people than in some states. Some areas are denser than others. More that 25 percent of our population is over 65. Young drivers are faced with traffic conditions that make driving more hazardous than the rest of the country.

Two of Suffolk's biggest transportation problems are getting out of the New York Metro area by auto and going from Sea to Sound by mass transportation. The ability to travel by mass transit to and from Manhattan is a minor problem compared to traveling by mass transit within the confines of LI.

Previously, we had Mr. Robert Shinnick from the Suffolk County Transportation Division speak to us about the county's bus system. The County buses are owned by the county, bought with Federal funds, but the bus routes are run by private vendors who also are responsible for maintaining the buses. Because the Federal government pays for 80% of the cost of full-sized buses purchased, the county and vendors maximize Federal funds by purchasing big buses despite the fact that in some cases riders would be served as well with smaller buses. This is a bureaucratic glitch that could be corrected. Due to lack of operating funds, there is no Sunday service. Adam has tried for several years to get information on the number of bus riders, their travel patterns and the peak hours of travel, but if the county has that information they are not providing it. Suffolk County's population density varies from area to area and the buses all seem to be standard city size buses. In the past some park and ride projects to major business centers such as Route 110 were tried with some success, but the County has not shown much creativity in resolving the mass transit problems. Adam has noted very few

Report on Transportation, continued

buses in the Hauppauge Industrial Park, the largest industrial park east of the Mississippi, which employs about 50,000 workers.

Inter-modal Transportation is when several transportation systems are integrated to deliver materials or people. Since container Inter-modal systems use 8 X 8 X 40 foot containers stacked two high on a railroad car, the LIRR bridges are currently too low to accommodate the height of these trains. The LIRR is currently working on lowering the tracks under these bridges so that they can accommodate these trains.

The LIRR, which dates back to 1845, is the largest commuter railroad in the US. It may be the major source to improve transportation of both goods and people for LI. Various projects are planned and some are now in actual development. For some time there has been talk of building a rail tunnel under the Hudson to use for freight trains. Currently, freight is either barged over to LI or brought on trains across the Hudson near Albany and down to the NYC area. With the exception of the LIRR most railroad tracks are owned by freight railroad companies; other railroad companies pay fees to use the tracks similar to fees paid to AT&T by other phone companies using their wires.

The New York and Atlantic Railroad is Long Island's local freight rail service using the LIRR tracks to bring freight trains throughout LI after assembling the trains in Queens.

The Sills Road Company is based on Sills Road in Yaphank and is in the asphalt and concrete business. It has plans to bring train-loads of crushed rock from upstate New York to Long Island, where the Company is building a terminal to transfer crushed rock to trucks for local delivery. This terminal may also be used to unload containers, and transfer them to trucks which will then deliver materials locally. Naturally, the reverse can be to load local material onto containers and railroad cars for shipment. When the LIRR finally builds a doubletrack system to Ronkonkoma and hopefully beyond, it will be easier to run freight trains more frequently.

Other possible locations for such terminals must have the land available to have sidings for rail cars as well

as areas for transferring containers between railroad cars and trucks, and for loading and unloading containers when necessary. They should have easy highway access.

And finally, a note from the reporter: New York State has, as far back as the 50's and probably earlier, paid more in federal taxes than it ever got back in federal aid, while for many states it was just the opposite, with states like Texas and Alaska receiving far more federal aid than they paid out in taxes. This was even the case after 9/11, with states like Montana receiving substantial federal funds for security projects while New York received less per capita even though we had the greater security threat. It may have made sense when New York was one of the largest and richest states, but that time has passed. We now need the money to solve some of our own problems.

Peggy Olness

STRONG MEMBERS

STRONG LEADERS

STRONG GOVERNMENT

This is the call to meeting for the 54th Biennial Convention of the League of Women Voters of New York State. It will be held May 20 to 22 at the Desmond Hotel in Albany and always offers an excellent way to learn about the League at its best. It is a good experience for new members as well as seasoned ones. Based on our membership, we can send three delegates; our Board of Directors voted on March 9 to allocate funds to pay for two delegates, including registration, travel and room and meals. If you want more information about the program or wish to serve as a delegate, please call Nancy, 730-6556.

At the convention, the delegates vote on the program for the next two years, the dues, and other issues that arise from the floor. There are workshops on the many issues on our agenda and there is an opportunity to meet other members and hear about other Leagues and what they are accomplishing. John Zogby, of Zogby Surveys will be the speaker at dinner. There is also a silent auction, and awards for many Leagues.

A LETTER YOU CAN SEND TO YOUR UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVES

Encouraged by US LWV, we are sending this letter to the local newspapers. Please let us know if your paper carries it.

The Clean Air Act saves lives. Since it was first enacted in 1970, the Clean Air Act has succeeded in cutting unhealthy levels of air pollution throughout the country, and has done so at a reasonable cost.

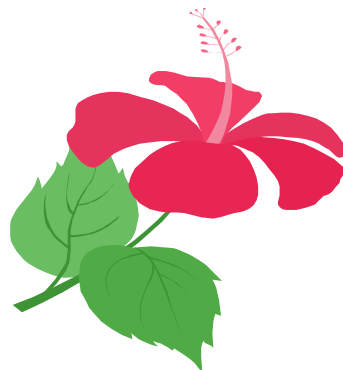
Now the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is updating regulations under the Clean Air Act to control toxic air pollutants, curb emissions from big power plants, and limit the pollutants that are causing global climate change. Unfortunately, special interests and their allies in Congress are trying to curtail EPA's authority and sidetrack these new rules.

This is a critical public health and environmental issue. But it is also a good government issue. In passing the Clean Air Act, Congress recognized that it's poorly equipped to make specific technical and scientific determinations. So Congress set overall goals, including protecting public health, and EPA was delegated responsibility to work with the best scientists and engineers in reviewing scientific data, monitoring industrial processes, and developing appropriate controls. Bypassing this process and letting Congress second-guess specific regulations at the behest of special interest lobbyists is simply bad government. It substitutes raw politics for scientific expertise.

The League of Women Voters believes that new clean air regulations are needed to protect our health and our environment. Toxic air pollution and global climate change must be addressed. And the League believes that Congress should not yield to special interests and undermine EPA. Scientific and technological decisions must be based on knowledge and expertise rather than raw politics.

REMEMBERING EDYTHE LEWIS

The League relies on many members who quietly do what has to be done, from year to year. One of those women was Edie Lewis, who died recently. She served on our Board as Membership Secretary and then Corresponding Secretary. She stayed on our Board because we needed her, although she had health problems that must have made it difficult for her. As I got to know her I realized how broad her interests were, and how deeply she thought about our League issues. She was always present at meetings, and introduced friends to the League. As one of her friends said in speaking of her passing, she was a very dear woman, and a remarkable one.



SUFFOLK COUNTY LWV VOTER

Redistricting News

Nancy Marr has been selected as the LWV representative on the Suffolk County Redistricting Commission. Leagues continue to educate members and the public about the need for legislation to create a New York State redistricting commission which is independent and bi-partisan.

Housing in Suffolk County

LWVSC Board members Barbara Jordan, Nancy Marr, Judie Gorenstein and Mary Zopf are compiling information which will lead to a report on the status of accessory apartments in Suffolk County townships. If you are interested in helping the housing committee, please contact one of them directly via phone or email

Naturalization Ceremonies and Voter Registration

After a successful effort registering newly naturalized citizens at the Central Islip courthouse in the fall, local Leagues are coordinating efforts to continue to assist with voter registration on certain Mondays throughout 2011. Please contact your local League if you would like to participate in this needed and rewarding project.

LWVSC now an affiliate member of Touro Law Public Advocacy Center

Touro Law welcomed LWVSC to the PAC and LWVSC is now seeking law school students to help with pro bono and volunteer projects during 2011. There is also the possibility of a work-study grant internship. Projects include research on NYS election law and cases, as well as collecting information on Suffolk County affordable housing details.

Board of Elections meets with LWVSC

Suffolk County BOE officials Jeanne O'Rourke and Mike Torres met with LWVSC Board members on Feb. 16 to review the LWV's post-election survey results and share the BOE's insights and plans for 2011.

SC BOE will use the new optical scan machines at all special elections which are run by the BOE (e.g. SC 6th LD special election).

Other special election districts (e.g. library, school, fire, etc.) are offered use of the new machines, but may choose to use the lever machines or paper ballots.

Although NYS now permits "split shift" inspection schedules on election day, SC BOE will monitor the effectiveness of this program in other counties before making any changes here.

SC BOE will no longer depend on telephoned results on election night—the shortcomings of this process were evident in 2010's general election. Instead, the BOE is developing a method for receiving the machine results directly from the memory cards.

Hydro-fracking Moratorium Advocacy

The Marcellus Shale in upstate New York (including part of the watershed that provides water for more than 7 million people in New York City) is an area that has an abundance of natural gas. Permits have been secured for companies to start drilling but because of the activities of environmental groups and pressure from many citizens there is a temporary moratorium until July, 2011 on any fracking procedure in New York State. The method employed in fracking is to drill a deep well, and once drilled, millions of gallons of water, sand and proprietary chemicals (a mixture of 596 highly toxic chemicals) are injected, under high pressure, into it. The pressure fractures the shale and props open fissures that enable natural gas to flow more freely out of the well. This injected water then becomes contaminated and has to be disposed of forever. Since the wells are typically 8,000 feet deep and water aquifers are about 1,000 feet deep there is a good chance of contamination of water that is used for drinking, cooking, bathing, and for animals and farming. LWVUS has a position against the current fracking process. We need to see to it that this becomes a permanent ban for, if the companies succeed in defeating the moratorium, we run the risk of destroying the watershed forever which would create a major water shortage. The result: the need for water for New York City will become so intense that Long Island's precious and pure aquifer supply will possibly be auctioned to the highest bidder Brenda Reiss (LWV Huntington) will information at the March 16 LWVSC board meeting in Riverhead. Local League members are invited to learn more about the important advocacy issue for 2011.

Academy Award Nominated Documentary "Gasland" available for Showing/Discussion

Please contact Brenda Reiss

(habrenda@earthlink.net 631 261 7093) if you are interested in showing Gasland to members of



George R. Rehn

Certified Public Accountant

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Our advertisers support of the League provides the funds to publish and mail the VOTER to all our members each month. Please patronize and thank all of them for their support of our mission.

Thank you for your support! – Alice D'Amico

ELECTION PLANNED FOR SIXTH DISTRICT

March 29 is the date for a special election for Suffolk County's Sixth Legislative District to replace Daniel Losquadro, who was elected to the position of New York State Assembly in place of Mark Alessi. The candidates running for the seat are Sarah Anker, Democratic and Working Families Parties, and Martin Haley, Republican, Conservative and Independence Parties.

Sarah Anker is a member of the League of Women Voters and is currently Director of the Town of Brookhaven Office of Energy and Sustainability, which works to create jobs and spearhead investments in green jobs initiatives. . She helped establish the Heritage Trust in Mount Sinai and is dedicated to efforts to reduce breast cancer.

Martin Haley is currently the Brookhaven Town Building Commissioner. He served as a Suffolk County Legislator from 1996 to 2003, and has been Deputy County Treasurer and Town Aviation Manager. He supports a referendum on spending caps, and will work toward main street stimulus grants. As a businessman, he urges company-friendly legislation.

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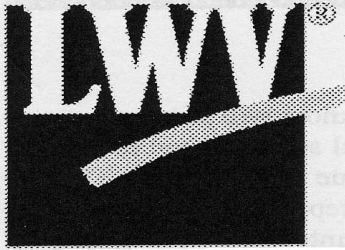
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- Wed Mar 9 Brookhaven LWV Board Meeting, Betsy Gaidry's, 2 pm
- Wed Mar 16 Suffolk County LWV Board Meeting, Suffolk Comm. College Culinary Inst, 9:30 am
- Mon Mar 21 **“The Last Fix”—documentary film about drug courts and the idea of alternative sentencing**, Emma Clark Library, 2 pm.
- Wed Mar 30 **“The Last Fix”—documentary film about drug courts and the idea of alternative sentencing**, Bellport Library, 7 pm

APRIL

- Wed Apr 13 Brookhaven LWV Board Meeting, Lea Becker's, 2 pm
- Sat Apr 16 LWV ANNUAL LUNCHEON—The Fifth Season, Port Jefferson, noon

