

# League of Women Voters

Port Washington-Manhasset

April 2011



President Jane Thomas

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## Redistricting New York State? Or Reshaping? Which will it be?

by Jane Thomas

Every ten years, “REDISTRICTING” looms large in the minds of every New York State legislator. For years, the League has urged the NYS legislature to adopt an independent commission to take the drawing of new district lines out of the hands of partisan legislators and allow this commission to do the hard work impartially.

During the run up to the last election, legislative candidates in both parties agreed that this was going to be the decade to initiate this independent commission. It wasn't a matter of *if* it would take place, it was only a matter of *when*. Since the election, however, much has changed. State Senate Republicans are now calling for a Constitutional Convention to set up an Independent Commission. The logistics of getting a constitutional amendment passed essentially continues the status quo in Albany and will delay any changes in the current redistricting system until 2022 at the earliest.

According to a June 2010 Quinnipiac poll, nearly two-thirds of voters—across both parties—believe that legislators should create this independent body to draw district lines. Accordingly, the League, Citizens Union and NYPIRG launched **ReShapeNY**. This redistricting reform initiative aims to end partisan gerrymandering and create a fair and independent process to redraw both state legislative and U.S. congressional district lines in time for the 2012 elections.

**ReShapeNY** is a broad-based campaign made up statewide and local civic-minded organizations, as well as individuals who want to bring change to Albany and help restore public confidence in our state government. The campaign will lobby legislators and engage in public education across the state to ensure redistricting reform is realized this time around. See more at [www.reshapeny.org](http://www.reshapeny.org).

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## Message from the President's Desk

Jane Thomas

There will be several “hot button” legislative items to work on during the next few months. Immediately, we need to press our state legislators to once again support our position on Ethics Reform/Improved Campaign Finance Enforcement (see page 3). Last session, the bill the League supported passed but, ultimately, was vetoed by then-Governor Patterson. So, it's back to the drawing board. Several of us will lobby our new Senator, Jack Martins, and Assemblywoman, Michelle Schimel, on these issues in the next few weeks.

On a national level, the House of Representatives has approved a bill that would block urgently needed new pollution controls under the Clean Air Act and de-fund programs that control life-threatening pollution. For decades, the EPA has protected us from dangerous pollutants through the Clean Air Act. In just the last twenty years carbon monoxide, which negatively affects those with heart and lung diseases, has been cut by seventy percent. You need to take action on this issue. Please phone or e-mail Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and Congressman Gary Ackerman (their phone numbers and e-mail addresses are in the brochure “**They Represent You**” enclosed in this newsletter. We've got to voice our opinions.

Our Lunch With the League was again another success story, in spite of bad weather, slow service and our local newspapers neglecting to credit us for sponsoring it in their article covering Jon Kaiman's “State of the Town” address. Kudos to Amy Bass, Rita Tanski, Julie Harnick, Marie Bellon, Nancy

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### League of Women Voters’ Statement at Town Hall: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 on Harbor View Senior Apartments

The following statement was read by Jane Thomas at the February 15<sup>th</sup> Town Board Meeting:

*The League has existed in Port for over seventy years. I would like to refer to a booklet celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> year. It states that in 1939, the League was the lead organization, amid much opposition, advocating for legislation to allow the town to build low-income housing using a Town Authority.*

*That legislation was finally passed in 1946 and Port’s Harbor Homes were finally built in 1951, sixty years ago this year. So you can understand that League involvement and concern for what is best for the residents of Harbor Homes is long and deep.*

*We firmly believe that your proposal to build 48 senior apartments on a 1.5 acre-lot that constitutes all the remaining open space on this site is premature.*

*Now, as Harbor Homes is celebrating its own 60-year anniversary, the League insists that more time be allotted to assure that Harbor Homes residents are involved, that the open space issue and size of the project has been thoroughly researched, that potential traffic problems are addressed, that water needs, sewer capacity--the entire panoply of environmental and social issues are explored. Only then can the outcome insure that all parties are informed and satisfied.*

*In order to achieve this outcome, the League of Women Voters strongly urges a longer period of time for the Town Board and the community to consider this proposal on the 1.5 acre site at Harbor Homes. We want the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Harbor Homes to be a present for its residents, not a problem for years to come.*

**NOTE:** *As a result of this meeting, the Town of North Hempstead Board decided to conduct a more extensive investigation to identify a more suitable location for this Housing Authority proposal.*

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

Cowles, Sue Fitzgerald, Mary Ellen McCollum, Kay Ullman and many others for putting together this splendid event.

This month, we became key players in the controversy over the Harbor View Senior Apartment complex proposed to be built by the North Hempstead Housing Authority on the small piece of land behind Harbor Homes. (See article in column one of this page.)

Please always remember that our League serves a vital role in our community. We need new members and we depend on you to recommend possible candidates. Don’t hesitate to ask your neighbors and friends if they are interested. Then, please call our stalwart Membership Director, Mary Ellen McCollum at 944-6740. It works!

**Jane**

(Redistricting cont. from page 1, column 1)

The goal is to pass state legislation that ends the politically manipulative drawing of district lines and instead establishes a politically balanced and impartial commission to ensure that the process serves all New Yorkers and their communities. If you are interested in getting rid of Albany’s “status quo” mentality, go to [www.reshapeny.org](http://www.reshapeny.org) and get involved.

### “They Represent You” – Don’t Ever Forget That!

Enclosed in this April Newsletter you will find this year’s edition of “**They Represent You.**” Use it whenever you are irate or delighted about something in national, state, county or local government. All the information is there. Keep it by your telephone and computer so ts at a moment’s notice. It’s invaluable.



## LWVNY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORMING ETHICS LAWS

The League has long felt that the laws of New York State inadequately define, monitor or discipline unethical behavior in the public sector, both on the part of public officials and lobbyists. In reviewing various ethics and lobbying proposals, the League looked at three areas:

- 1). What activity is prohibited and what disclosures are required?
- 2). Are the penalties for violation sufficient to compel required disclosure and dissuade prohibited behavior?
- 3). Is the enforcement body sufficiently empowered and nonpartisan to punish violators efficiently and effectively?

It has been the League’s position that a meaningful system of ethics and lobbying regulations must contain all three elements, for if any element is omitted the system will not function to achieve desired results.

Recommendation for additional prohibitions includes:

- Ban pay-to-play (the process by which lobbyists and individuals with governmental business gain influence with legislators through campaign contributions and offers of outside employment to legislators and/or their family members).
- Strengthen the ban on the personal use of campaign contributions in accordance with federal standards.

Recommended disclosures include:

- Public on-line disclosure by legislators of all outside business interests, including disclosure of clients by lawyers and consultants.
- Public on-line disclosures of the financial backgrounds of public officers, with redaction only of information that is clearly private or confidential.

The League believes serious lobbying and ethics violations should be felonies.

The League believes the enforcement agency should have the following characteristics:

- At a minimum, jurisdiction over both the executive and legislative branches, unlike the split jurisdiction that currently exists.
- Nonpartisan, chosen by a designating commission for appointing members. No one elected official would make a majority of appointments to the commission.
- Independent and stable funding source, as opposed to relying on the legislature for support. (continued in top of next column)

- Power to conduct random compliance audits and investigate complaints through administrative action.
- Power to levy increased civil penalties and to collect such penalties through administrative action.
- Power to share information with other oversight and enforcement groups, including agencies that initiate criminal proceedings.

For more information on the League’s efforts on reforming ethics laws visit [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org).

### National Council of Jewish Women, Long Island Chapter, to Honor League of Women Voters of Nassau County

The National Council of Jewish Women, Long Island, will honor the League of Women Voters of Nassau County and Judy Jacobs, Nassau County Legislator, on **Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>** at Temple Avodah, 3050 Oceanside Rd, Oceanside, NY. The theme of the luncheon is “**WOMEN + ADVOCACY = POWER.**” Luncheon cost is \$36. Contact: 516-569-3660.

### Celebrate Earth Day on April 22!

**Earth Day** is a day that is intended to inspire awareness and appreciation for the Earth’s natural environment. Earth Day was founded by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson as an environmental teach-in first held on April 22, 1970. While this first Earth Day was focused on the United States, an organization launched by Denis Hayes, who was the original national coordinator in 1970, took it international in 1990 and organized events in 141 nations. Earth Day is now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network, and is celebrated in more than 175 countries every year. April 22 corresponds to spring in the Northern Hemisphere and autumn in the Southern Hemisphere.

Numerous communities celebrate Earth Week, an entire week of activities focused on environmental issues. In 2009, the United Nations designated **April 22 International Mother Earth Day**. This year’s Earth Day theme is “**A Billion Acts of Green.**”

Join in an event!



**Calendar:**

**Fri, April 22: EARTH DAY: join in an event!**

**Sat, May 7: Joan Kent**, author of **Discovering Sands Point**, will be an honoree at the Friends of Sands Point spring gala at the Hempstead House. If you wish to attend, contact Jean Marie Posner at [JMStarrbart@aol.com](mailto:JMStarrbart@aol.com) or call Marcia Forman at 883-3199.

**Wed, May 11: National Council of Jewish Women, LI Luncheon:** honoring LWV of Nassau see page 3

**May 20-22, 2011: LWVNY State Convention.** The New York League of Women Voters State Convention will be held at The Desmond Hotel in Albany from May 20-22, 2011. Jane Thomas and Judy Jacobson will represent the Port Washington-Manhasset League at the convention. If anyone wishes to attend, call Jane Thomas at 516 - 883-0698

**Thurs, June 2: LWV Nassau County Convention:** at Mangia Bene, Great Neck from 4-8 p.m. Save the date. Details to follow.

**Friday, June 10: Annual Meeting of the Port Washington-Manhasset League of Women Voters** at the Port Washington Public Library. Guest speakers: **NYS Senator Jack Martins & Assemblywoman Michele Schimel.** League business meeting 1 -2:15; guest speakers 2:30 - 5 pm. Details and invitations to follow. Open to the public.

**Sunday, June 12: LWV Port Washington-Manhasset Annual Spring Fundraiser Dinner** honoring our League's Public Relations Directors Kate Bergen and Patricia Maher will be held at the home Kay & Leo Ullman. Invitations to follow.

**Congratulations to our fabulous President, Jane Thomas, who was named to the Women's Roll of Honor of the Town of North Hempstead on March 16, 2011.**

**The League of Women Voters of Port Washington-Manhasset**  
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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.*