



Suffolk County Voter

www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org

July 2007

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Tues. July 17
Wed. Aug. 15

LWVSC Board Meeting—Riverhead Library 10am-12 noon
LWVSC Board Meeting—Riverhead Library 10am-12 noon

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Reports from the LWVNYS Convention

The 59th Biennial State LWV Convention was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains in mid-May. This Convention has always been important to me. Our own programs have been strengthened by leadership and expertise from the State. Election reform, abolishing the death penalty, and education finance are some of the most recent positions. We watched Marcia Merrins, State President for the past four years, give the gavel to Martha Kennedy, who has been an excellent Membership Chairman for several years. We look forward to working with Martha, but we will miss Marcia's intelligent insights as well as her vigor and exuberance. We were reminded throughout the plenary sessions, especially, of the importance of local Leagues' input and support of the critical work of the LWVNYS.

Nancy Marr
President, LWV of Brookhaven

For more reports from the LWVNYS convention, turn to page 2,3, and 4

Katherine Hoak speaks (and the Governor and County Exec listen!) at Redistricting Press Conference— see page 4

Pollack Gardens

The LWVNYS adopted a position in support of Alternatives to Incarceration in 1993, in part as a response to the highly punitive Rockefeller drug laws. ATI became especially relevant to the LWVSC because of the need to build additional jail space in our County. The League has continually pushed to enhance the existing ATI programs whose success in reducing recidivism is well established; their success would reduce the need for additional room in our jails. As the Legislative Committee of the LWVSC delved into the many ramifications of ATI programs, it became aware of the large numbers of mentally ill people who get caught up in the criminal justice system, especially because of the inadequacy of services for them. Many have concomitant difficulties with substance abuse. Supportive housing is an outstanding need and LWVSC has focused our recent energies on this issue.

In this light, we had been invited on May 23rd to participate in the Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting Celebration of Pollack Gardens in West Sayville, which is an innovative 50 unit studio apartment complex for people recovering from psychiatric disabilities. This housing represents an unprecedented coordination between Concern for Independent Living (CIL) and many state and local agencies.

Ralph Fasano, Executive Director of CIL, led the ceremony and officials from many of the involved agencies spoke. Several who were most instrumental in seeing Pollack Gardens through to its successful development were honored. Particularly important to the ceremony was the testimony of residents now living there.



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More reports from the LWVNYS Convention

Universal Healthcare in Our Time?

Dr. Oliver Fein, M.D., Professor of Clinical Medicine and Clinical Public Health
Associate Dean of Affiliations, Weill Medical College of Cornell University

Dr. Fein is active in an organization (PNHP) of 14,000 physicians (there are 700,000 physicians in the United States) who are promoting a "Single Payer Health Care" system for our country. His presentation covered a brief history of health care in the USA, starting in 1936 when Blue Cross became the first private provider-employer subsidized health care system. Medicare was introduced in 1965. Currently, a mixture of systems that are increasingly leaving more and more citizens without any health care coverage exists. Dr. Fein discussed the pros and cons of the plans now in effect in Canada and Massachusetts. Presently, 18 states have introduced or passed legislation regarding Universal Health Care, including New York (S.3107 and A07364). He made a case for a Single Payer Plan, patterned on the Medicare model, which is now the cheapest and most effective plan in effect. Of the bills in Congress, he supported the Conyers bill #H.R.676 which is currently in the Subcommittee on Health. In this system, in effect an extension of Medicare, everyone would be covered. There would be no uninsured or under-insured in our country. It would cost taxpayers less and we would have a healthier population. (The materials, along with the video presentation, will be available from the LWVNYS web site.)

Mary McLaughlin,
Treasurer,
LWV of Huntington

Non-PMP Revenue: How to Access Resources

Kristen Hansen, Executive Director, LWVNYS

This is a summary of the points made for preparation of a proposal:

- Funding is available from corporations and foundations.
- They have different goals -- corporations seek publicity, recognition and/or goodwill; foundations seek to further their goals.
- There are expectations on both sides. Corporations and foundations want results. The League would have to form a "symbiotic relationship".
- Make a written case for funding - the urgency, the benefits to society, and be compelling, enthusiastic, and portray competence and experience. Limit it to 2 pages.
- Answer the questions -- why, what, where, when, and how -- to show how goals will be achieved.
- Governance - in the proposal, describe board structure, and describe capacity to handle proposed project.
- Describe organizational budget. Project income and expenses for the project.
- Include history of the League in the proposal. It's a major selling point.

Adam Gaus
1st Vice President, LWVSC

Fun Fundamentals

Cheryl Graeve, Membership Director, LWVUS

Cheryl Graeve lead the workshop on the policies and practices unique to the League. She emphasized the importance of focusing, advising the local leagues to undertake fewer projects, and to do those well. She used the acronym FOCUS to highlight the most important principles:

—First rule: nonpartisanship. To ensure adherence to this cardinal rule, the nonpartisanship policy of the League should be reviewed every year, and published so that it is adequately disseminated and followed.

—Outreach: reach out to the community. Use your programs to establish a place and visibility in the community.

—Consensus

—Us: always remember that this is a grassroots organization.

—Speaking with one voice. Take care that the local League speaks with one voice, and that it does not conflict with positions which have been taken on a state or national level.

Carol Mellor
Co-President,
LWV of the Hamptons

The Awards Banquet

The Awards Banquet was held on Saturday evening, May 19th. When we opened our programs we were thrilled to discover that LWV of Smithtown had won the Excellence Award for Outstanding Local League Bulletin in its League size category. All the Suffolk County attendees felt justified in being very proud of Lisa Scott, Smithtown's Voter Editor. Lisa is also Co-President of LWVSC.

Sondra Irvine
President
LWV of Smithtown

Order—Not Only in the Courts

Marion Sinek, Parliamentarian
LWV New Castle

Although there is credentialed training available through which one can receive certification as a parliamentarian, a specialist in Roberts Rules of Order, the majority of parliamentarians receive their training on the job and after much experience, which was the case for Mrs. Sinek, former President of the LWVNY.

This workshop went into great detail on parliamentary procedures. At heart what was critical to know, though, is that the Rules of Order are followed to assure an orderly, predictable process for meetings. The Rules underline the right of the majority to rule, the right of the minority to be heard, and the right of the individual to participate in the process.

We received a handout, "Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance", which will be distributed to members.

Katherine Hoak
Co-President, LWVSC

Democracy in Action at the Convention

Anyone who attended the LWVNY convention in White Plains was able to clearly see democracy in action. Delegates from a local League introduced a motion for a statewide study: "Should NY join the Compact for a National Popular Vote?" Under this compact, the popular vote during a national election would be counted from all the states and Wash. DC. They would be added together to obtain the total for each candidate. The states entering the Compact would award their electoral votes to the candidate who receives the largest number of total votes.

The LWVUS believes the direct popular vote method of electing the president and vice president is essential to representative government and that the Electoral College should be abolished. This compact in essence does the same thing, but without an amendment to abolish the Electoral College, a highly unlikely probability. Our state board, though, felt that at the present time, there is not enough time and person power to do a statewide study and therefore recommended against such a statewide study. There were two caucuses held at the convention to discuss the Compact for a National Popular Vote. At the last plenary session the delegates from local Leagues across the State almost unanimously voted to do a statewide study, overriding the State Board's recommendation. Now members from local Leagues across NYS will have the opportunity to be part of this crucial study.

Judie Gorenstein
Chair, Voter Services, LWVSC

Pollack Gardens *continued from page 1*

Dawn D'Amico-Meyer spoke with clarity and conviction for herself and other residents both at the ceremony and later. Many have experienced homelessness when they had no access to housing. She had at one time to live in a campground for several months. Her children were not able to attend school because they had no address. Some of the residents have had to live in crowded facilities; Dawn pointed out the discomfort of sharing one refrigerator and one bathroom with as many as nine other people! Dealing with mental illness, substance abuse, and sometimes sexual abuse produces extraordinary difficulties. Medications can be hard to come by or not taken. Gaps in services can be significant and obviously counter-productive to stabilization and recovery.

Living at Pollack Gardens has made an enormous difference for the residents. Dawn stressed the fact that there are no gaps in services there; all their needs are taken care of. There is a comforting sense of safety and security. The staff knows the residents, and the residents each other. When there is any indication of an illness rearing up, it is noticed immediately and appropriate steps are taken. Dawn stressed the presence of a level of trust that enables her to be herself all the time. Her children, now flourishing young adults, are free to live their own lives; they are so relieved and can now visit her with pleasure!

Trained staff is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. A service coordinator meets with each resident and helps each both to set realistic goals and to reach them. A medication manager observes each resident taking his/her prescribed medications. Case managers from several community agencies are present as well. A director and assistant director deal with administrative issues, an administrative assistant monitors and directs traffic in the halls, and maintenance personnel take care of the premises. Each rental unit in Pollack Gardens contains a kitchen and bathroom. Also available is a congregate kitchen where two meals a day are provided, an exercise room, library, computer room, patio and lounges.

The residents at Pollack Gardens were accepted there through the County's SPOA, Single Point of Access, the universal housing application. Many submit applications, but few people are accepted for housing because of its scarcity.

Concern for Independent Living was founded in 1972 by a group of friends and parents that advocated for former patients of the closed Central Islip State Hospital. Today, Concern for Independent Living manages over 160 different sites in Suffolk County and is the largest provider of this type of housing on Long Island.

Pollack Gardens is named after Dr. Davis and Helen Pollack, both of whom are on CIL's Board. They have been longtime advocates for services for people with psychiatric disabilities.

Katherine Hoak

Reapportionment Legislation Adopted in Suffolk County

The Suffolk County Legislature passed redistricting reform legislation on April 24th. It takes the politics out of the decadal process which follows the census. Instead of political parties determining district lines to ensure their incumbency, or “gerrymandering”, an independent apportionment commission will be formed, something which LWVNYS has been pushing for since 1966!

The commission members will be chosen, four each, by the majority and the minority leaders of the Legislature. The commission will be comprised of four retired judges, two minority community leaders and two voter rights/good government organizations, to draft a reapportionment plan. Five members of the commission will constitute a quorum and six affirmative votes will be required to adopt the final report and plan.

Minimum qualifications for the appointees are that they must be registered to vote in Suffolk County and may not have changed party affiliation in the immediately preceding two years. Each must sign an affidavit not



to seek elected office or serve as a paid consultant for five years thereafter. Each appointee may not have served for the preceding ten years in any partisan office. The legislation also gives directions to the commission and the procedures to be followed in the event of difficulties within the process.

County Executive Levy called a press conference on May 17th to herald and then sign this important legislation. We were honored to have Governor Eliot Spitzer,

who has highlighted the importance of such redistricting legislation, at the press conference. In his remarks, Governor Spitzer acknowledged the importance of the League's involvement with this legislation, which led to its ultimate passage.

More reports from the LWVNYS Convention

My First New York State Convention

I have spent the past two years focusing on our Shelter Island chapter, so attending the New York State Convention was a great way to broaden my perspective on the League of Women Voters. I was impressed by the dedicated and interesting delegates I met, and I learned more about the League's approach and programs through the workshop on “Fun Fundamentals” and the plenary sessions. A highlight for me was Eve Burton's talk about her successes as a First Amendment attorney on behalf of the Hearst Corporation, CNN, and the New York Daily News. She certainly exemplifies the League's premise that doing your homework and being persistent can pay off in the end, even when going up against powerful political opposition. It was also instructive for me to see the groundswell for adding a study on the Compact for a National Popular Vote that developed during the convention. While I was most persuaded by Barbara Bartoletti's position that the League should concentrate its time and resources on those studies that have the best chance of having an impact, it was

good to see such passion about an issue that is at the core of our democracy.

When I returned from the convention, members and friends asked me whether the County, State, and National Leagues are really making a difference. They see what we are accomplishing on Shelter Island, but it is harder to sort through all the information in the newsletters and come out with a sense of the League's successes at the non-local levels. I am pleased to be able to point to the Suffolk County League's recent involvement with and the final victory of redistricting in our county. I talk generally about the optical scan voting machine, the study on financing education, and alternatives to incarceration. However, for those of us who are not immersed in the larger League projects and studies, it would be very helpful to have all of the State convention's messages boiled down into three or four “talking points” that say what action the League took on important issues and what its accomplishments were.

Betsy Jacobson,
President,
LWV of Shelter Island