

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE

(Serving Bronxville, Eastchester, Tuckahoe, Mt. Vernon and Yonkers)

JAN/FEB 2007

BULLETIN

ISSUE THREE

The League of Women Voters of Bronxville

invites you to an informational meeting on

Staying Healthy in a Fowl Situation: The Epidemic of Chicken-related Diseases And What the Consumer Can Do

***Speaker: Dr. Urvashi Rangan
Senior Scientist and Policy Analyst
Consumers Union***

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2007

7:00 PM

***THE YEAGER ROOM
BRONXVILLE LIBRARY
201 Pondfield Road***



Light refreshments will be served

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends and Fellow Leaguers:

My upstairs neighbor and Scrabble friend appeared on my doorstep the other evening bearing the Westchester Guardian, a new local weekly, and, pointing to a paragraph at the end of an article in it captioned "Freedom Isn't Free", said: "That's you, she's quoted, isn't it?" The paragraph reads: "The wise president of the Bronxville League of Women Voters shared this important piece of information with others and with me at a panel discussion of the Voting Rights Act last year.... in order to partake of America's freedoms we must be vigilant. In other words, freedom isn't free." I allowed as how the quote sounded like me and then remembered that I had indeed done the panel and had reminded my audience that freedoms not guarded are all too easily lost. And that is what we, as members of the League, are about: working to insure that the freedoms vouchsafed to us by the Constitution remain to be used and enjoyed not only by us but also by those who follow us as residents and citizens.

No law, and that includes the Constitution, is self enforcing. A law is an idea committed to writing. It may or may not be enforced. Or it may be gutted by subsequent enactments or it may be construed by those charged with its execution in such a way as to skew it completely. In the case of the Fifteenth Amendment which ensured universal male suffrage after the Civil War, it certainly did not achieve its clearly stated purpose. It was most assuredly not enforced for the benefit of the freed slaves and the Klan and other hate groups, including a number of state legislatures, saw to it that its purpose was not achieved. The words and the idea they embodied were noble; the attainment of the goal was almost totally frustrated. On the other hand, we have the noble words of the Fourteenth Amendment with the guarantees of due process and equal protection and we see them truncated and frustrated by provisions of the Patriot Act and the Detainee's Act. Speaking of the Patriot Act, I must add here that a lawyer friend of mine relayed the following vignette to me. He was asked whether he'd read the Patriot Act and then whether he'd read all of this very long statute. He replied: "Yes, I read it back in the '70's." His interlocutor rejoined, "But it was enacted only a short while ago." "I know, " my friend Jim shot back, "I've read 1984."

A final word about the Voting Rights Act. It was enacted in 1964 in an attempt to set up machinery to reverse a century of the disenfranchisement of minorities. Among other things it empowered the US Department of Justice to monitor any and all actions with respect to voting rights by states with histories of discrimination against minorities and to bring enforcement actions against such jurisdictions. The current administration has gutted the Civil Rights Division of the Department and enforcement actions have been, of recent years, few and far between. The Act is not self enforcing and the noble idea embodied in well wrought and noble words has been in large measure frustrated. And we, as Leaguers, need to let our Congressmen and Senators know that we are mightily disturbed.

I wish you all a happy and rewarding New Year!

Sandy

A Recommended Dues Increase

The League of Women Voters US (National) dues were raised as of July 1st, 2006. Our current per member payment to National is \$26.30 for an individual member, and \$39.45 for household members. This increase was unexpected in 2006. (A 10.5% increase)

Our current per member payment to The New York State League is \$18.00 for individual and \$27.00 for households
Our current per member payment to The County League is \$2.00 per individual, and \$3.00 for household

The total of our payments to the above is \$46.30 per individual member, and \$69.45 per household. Since our current membership fees of \$45.00 for individuals and \$65.00 for household members, the National rate increase puts us in a deficit situation. The Board believes a dues increase is required. The Board has approved a raise to \$50.00 for an individual member and \$75.00 for household members to take effect April 1, 2007.

As a member of the League, you have a right to vote for or against the increase. You can fill out the tear off below and send it to LWVBronxville, P.O.Box 321, or e-mail your response to me at adigiorgi@optonline.net. Please respond by February 28, 2007

Best regards for the New Year. I look forward to hearing from you.
Adelaide DiGiorgi, Vice President & Membership Chair, LWVBronxville

Yes, I accept the new dues increase

No, I do not accept the new dues increase

Name _____

Tel. No, or email _____

Address _____

Comments _____

*****UPCOMING EVENTS*****

BRONXVILLE LWV MONTHLY COFFEE

Bronxville Women's Club

Tuesday, February 20, 2007

9:30 AM

Subject and speaker to be announced

**BREAKFAST WITH THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ANDREW SPANO**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2007

9:30 AM

**White Plains Library
Martine Avenue**

**Mr. Spano will discuss the issues of importance to Westchester
and answer questions from the audience**

A breakfast of coffee and bagels will be served at no cost

**Ninth Annual Women's History Month Conference
Sarah Lawrence College**

Friday/Saturday, March 2-3, 2007

WOMEN AT WAR: Soldiers, Sisters, Survivors

**Keynote Speaker: Janis L. Karpinski
Former commander at Abu Ghraib and author of the book:**

**ONE WOMAN'S ARMY: The Commanding General of Abu Ghraib
Tells Her Story**



*our next evening program
with Dr. Urvashi Rangan of Consumers Union
Tuesday, February 13 at 7:00 p.m.*

STAYING HEALTHY IN A FOWL SITUATION:

the epidemic of chicken-related diseases and what consumers can do

The next Bronxville League program falls under the "health information" category, but it's a little different from our usual community programs.

We don't mean to scare anyone, but contaminated chickens have become a serious national problem. According to *Consumer Reports Magazine*, "Many of the contaminated chickens harbored strains of salmonella and campylobacter that are resistant to antibiotics commonly used against those bugs, which can cause fever, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps." *Time Magazine* has dramatically stated that chicken is "one of the most dangerous items in the American home."

Can this be true? In the US each year, at least 1,000 people die and millions of Americans are sickened as a result of contact with chickens purchased for food. This is a problem compounded with the inability of antibiotics to help these patients; often seriously ill people must take several different antibiotics before finding one that works. In addition, this significantly increases the cost of health care.

What is going on here? Where is our government? "*Who is minding the hen house?*" asked consumer advocate Howard Lyman when maintaining that "the USDA has placed the interests of the influential poultry industry ahead of those of the poultry-consuming public."

Again, according to *Consumer Reports*, "Since 1998, a federally mandated system called HACCP (pronounced hass-ip) has been the consumer's main protection against contaminated poultry, meat, and seafood. The initials stand for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points, and the system requires chicken producers to spell out where contamination might occur during processing, then build in procedures to prevent it. . . .According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there has been a significant reduction in major foodborne illnesses since HACCP was implemented. [However in recent years]. . . .USDA inspectors at meat and poultry plants are failing to spot faults in HACCP plans, according to a report issued last August by the General Accounting Office, the government watchdog agency. The agency concluded that inspectors missed problems or, when they found them, didn't require quick corrections."

In addition to poor inspection procedures, new poultry diseases and antibiotic-resistant strains of infection have affected chicken production and preparation. The watchdog government agencies are not watching and are not regulating.

If such a large proportion of Americans are getting seriously ill each year from poultry, it's time consumers realized this is truly a national problem of epidemic proportions.

In the current issue of *Consumer Reports* you can read a lot about chickens. The magazine you trust to test cars and toasters has now extensively tested chickens. They also give guide-lines how you can remain relatively safe from the menace of poultry-related diseases.

The main article on the topic, entitled "**Of birds and bacteria 'Superbugs' that resist the usual antibiotic treatments are nasty, and they could be in your chicken dinner. Here's how to protect yourself**" is extremely useful and helpful. It also leads to more concerns and questions.

The League is honored and delighted that Consumers Union senior scientist and policy analyst **Dr. Urvashi Rangan** will be our speaker **Tuesday evening, February 13 at the Bronxville Library**. This topic is of vital importance to all in our community. Even if you don't eat chicken, you can become ill through contamination. But, do not fear - not all is gloom and doom if we are vigilant and aware of what we can do.

So, **please join us on February 13 and bring friends and neighbors**. As always, we will have excellent refreshments. For additional information or if you need a ride, please call **914/779-8354** or email: bronxvilleleague@aol.com

**Ninth Annual Women's History Month Conference
Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY**

Friday/Saturday March 2-3, 2007
(This conference is free and open to the public)

Women at War: Soldiers, Sisters, Survivors
Keynote Speaker: Janis L. Karpinski

War has always been seen as the work of men, but it has always touched women's lives, not only as mothers, sisters, wives and daughters but also as soldiers, commanders and spies. According to conventional wisdom, women can only be victims of war or naive advocates of peace. Facts belie that image. This conference is dedicated to unmasking the realities of war in women's lives.

Friday March 2, 2007

4:30 – 8:00 PM Heimbold Lobby
Registration

6:00 8:00pm - Heimbold Center--
Opening Plenary

Welcome - Tara James, Associate Director, Graduate Program in Women's History, Sarah Lawrence

Keynote Speaker Janis L. Karpinski, former commander of Abu Ghraib and author of the book, *One Woman's Army: The Commanding General of Abu Ghraib Tells Her Story.*

8:30 Opening Reception in Slonim House Living Room sponsored by the Graduate Student Senate

Saturday March 3, 2007

7:30-3:00pm, Registration in Heimbold Lobby
7:30-9:00am, Breakfast Reception in Heimbold Lobby
9:00-10:15am, Plenary Session in Heimbold 202

Opening Remarks: Priscilla Murolo, Director, Graduate Program in Women's History, Sarah Lawrence

Reading: Meena Alexander, Hunter College and Graduate Center at City University of New York

Presentations:

Rebecca Johnson, Sarah Lawrence College
Military Women and Torture
Maranda Hyde, Sarah Lawrence College
Serving My Country in Silence

(For information about panel discussions throughout the day, go to Sarah Lawrence Website: www.sl.c.edu and click on graduate studies, women's history, Conference 2007)

The Bronxville League of Women Voters is a co-sponsor of this program.

HEALTH ISSUES - January 2007

Along with the bells and the bubbly, come the high hopes and resolutions that always herald a new year. In keeping with that spirit, I send my heart felt good wishes to you all. May this be a safe and healthy and happy year for everyone. May it be as well for the country. Here's what 2007 looks like from here.

On the national scene, the Democrats are making health care a priority. Drug profits are rising along with drug prices. The Dems want Medicare to negotiate them with big pharma directly, saving tens of billions in tax payer money. They want to encourage development of low cost generics, tighten the regs on drug safety and examine the way drugs are marketed.. According to Berenson (NY Times, 12/18/06) nearly every pharmaceutical company is currently under civil or criminal investigation for allegedly marketing their products for off label use (often, with adverse outcomes). Think Zyprexa.

The old employment benefit structure, for which GM was famous, is quietly unraveling. Business leaders are urging their peers to help devise solutions that work for them, rather than adjust to what others offer. 46 million plus people lack health insurance of any kind.

Closer to home, NY State's Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century finished its plan for a complex reconfiguration of hospitals and other health care facilities, designed to save money, increase efficiency and safeguard care for the poor. Some under-used general hospitals, for instance, would become free standing clinics or dedicated centers for specialized care. Submitted in late November, it was to become law, in its entirety, unless rejected by the legislature and the then Governor Pataki by the end of 2006. That's breath taking speed, with no time for public discussion. As of now, however, it is under a 30-day injunction after which the court will issue a ruling.

As some of you may know, infections incurred in hospital kill an estimated 100,000 Americans every year - five times as many as die from AIDS. The most prevalent infection is M.R.S.A., a drug resistant staph infection. It can be prevented by identifying those patients who carry it (who shed the germs unknowingly on everything they touch or touches them) and then, using gowns, gloves and dedicated equipment to treat them. In this way, Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands have all but eradicate it, while here, with one of the worst records among developed nations, only a handful of hospitals use that protocol. *The New York Times*, in its report, cited none in New York State. For reasons unimaginable to us, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is not recommending screening for M.R.S.A., which requires just a nasal or skin swab. Betsy McCaughey, former lieutenant governor of New York, has founded a Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths. Please write to her, c/o *The New York Times*, about what action to take.

At our January 16th coffee meeting, we tackled questions about the FDA. Recent outbreaks of ecoli infections from contaminated produce on top of concerns about some blockbuster drugs have thrown the effectiveness and objectivity of the FDA in doubt.

Edith Szold, Health Issues Chair

NATURALIZATION COURT

Every month, there is a ceremony at the County Courthouse in White Plains swearing in new citizens. The League always sends representatives and April 4th is the Bronxville League's turn. It is a very moving experience and we invite any of our members who are interested to be our representatives. It usually takes place at around 1:00 PM. Please contact Janet Jaidi at 337-8484 or jjaidi@optonline.net for information and directions.

COUNTY NEWS

STATEMENT OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WESTCHESTER AT THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS' PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED 2007 COUNTY BUDGET, DECEMBER 6, 2006, 7:00 P.M., MICHAELIAN OFFICE BUILDING

The League of Women Voters of Westchester thanks the Board of Legislators for this opportunity to present its view on the proposed budget. We believe that the County budget must reflect the priorities of the citizens and taxpayers for services provided by the county government. In this context, we offer the following comments and suggestions.

Board of Legislators Budget: The League is concerned about the fact that, unlike other departments, the Board of Legislators does not list its personnel and salaries in the operating budget. This oversight must be corrected in future budgets.

Budget Process: The Board of Legislators must vigorously petition the County Executive to release the budget at an earlier date. His current schedule allows no time for analysis and study of this very complex and complicated document. As we have said for more than twenty years, this is a disservice to the public as well as to the Board of Legislators itself.

HAVA ("Help America Vote Act"): Based on extensive research by the LWNYS and LWVW, the League's position is that precinct-based optical scan machines with a verifiable paper trail are the most reliable and cost-effective voting machines available at this time. We expect there will be major increases in expenses required by HAVA legislation. The Board of Elections has already appropriated \$3 million for 2006, and is projected to spend another \$5.1 million in 2007. It is therefore essential that the Board of Legislators keep monitoring this item closely. In addition, we expect voter training to be a major issue, and the League, with its long record of service to voters, looks forward to assisting in this area.

MTA (Metropolitan Transit Authority): The County gives the MTA approximately \$130 million from the operating budget from such areas as a portion of the sales and mortgage taxes, with no accountability to the County. The Administration and the Board of Legislators must insist on periodic, audited reports detailing where the money is being spent.

Medical Center: The League believes that the continuing mission of the Medical Center is to serve as the regional tertiary care and trauma center. The League believes that all County support of the Medical Center should be consolidated in one place in both the operating and capital budgets. Since the Medical Center serves six neighboring counties, there should be continuing lobbying at the state level for assistance from these counties.

Taxes: The League is very concerned about the continual peaks and valleys in property tax levies. For example, in 2001 the change in the property tax levy was set at -5.2%. In 2002, the property tax levy was increased by 3.8%. In 2003, the property tax rate increased by 14.9% and was followed by a rise of 18.8% in 2004. In 2005, the tax levy was set at 0%. For 2006, the tax levy increase was 3.9%. In 2007, the proposed tax levy increase is projected to be 3.98%. The League believes that such fluctuations are not fiscally prudent and should be addressed by both the Board of Legislators and the Administration in future budgets.

Reassessment ("Reval"): While the proposed increase in the tax levy is 3.98%, there are municipalities that will sustain a hefty rise due to the lack of Reval. As we have stated in the past, Countywide property reassessment is essential, and the administration and Board of Legislators should immediately move forward to implement it. We are also concerned about the high cost of certioraris, or tax challenges. As shown in the budget, certioraris increased from \$5,461,768 in 2005 to a projected \$9,500,000 for 2006 to \$10,000,000 in 2007.

Contract Agencies: Because the League continues to support full funding of the contract agencies, we applaud the 5% increase for 2007 in this area, but we are concerned that the 2006 increase of 5% has not yet been released to these agencies.

Housing: The League urges continuing County support of the New Home Land Acquisition Fund, the Housing Implementation Fund, and housing assistance organizations, such as the Westchester Residential Opportunities and the Housing Action Council.

Pesticide Control: To ensure full implementation of and compliance with the Pesticide Reduction Law, the League strongly supports funding for a professional Pest Management Coordinator in the Department of Health.

The League of Women Voters of Westchester thanks Budget Director Kathleen Carrano and her staff for their availability and the information they have provided to us. We also thank the Board of Legislators for their consideration of our concerns and suggestions.

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**League of Women Voters of Bronxville
P.O. Box 321, Bronxville, NY 10708
President: Sondra K. Slade
Editor: Janet Jaidi**

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb 13	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Board Meeting	Bvl Women's Club
Feb 13	7:00 PM	Consumers & Diseases in Chickens (see inside)	Yeager Room Bronxville Library
Feb 20	9:30 AM	February Coffee	Bvl Women's Club
Feb 21	9:30 AM	Breakfast with County Executive Andrew Spano	White Plains Library Martine Avenue
Mar 2-3	see inside	Seminar at Sarah Lawrence College Women at War	Sarah Lawrence College 1 Mead Way