

COUNTY VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WESTCHESTER
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May 2007

CALL TO CONVENTION!

The 52nd Convention of the League of Women Voters of New York State

MAY 18 TO 20, 2007

*CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL
WHITE PLAINS*

Opening Plenary Session: 10:30 AM, Saturday, May 19th

Convention is the time when delegates representing the grassroots of our organization come together to make the important decisions that will guide us through the next two years. Come join us to elect officers and directors and participate in debate and decision on program emphasis for the next biennium.

The Convention Committee planned this gathering not only to meet requirements, but as a celebration too! We will have great workshops, speakers, O.I.N.K, Moments in the Sun, shopping at our Silent Auction, great camaraderie and just plain fun! Get to know some New York Leaguers outside your immediate area.

Delegates to Convention are responsible for choosing the 2007-2009 state program; adopting a state League budget; adopting revisions to the bylaws; and electing a slate of officers to serve for the next two years.

Delegates are uninstructed and are expected to use their own judgment in reaching decisions based on convention discussion. Delegates are committing their local Leagues to program study and action as well as financial obligation. Your League should be well-represented!

Every League member is encouraged to attend as a visitor. See inside for more information.

From the President's Desk

Is it Spring yet??

Although the calendar says it is, the thermometer says it is not. It has been very chilly, not at all suitable for new spring outfits. However, I have noticed that crocuses and daffodils are blooming here and there, and the weeping willows and maple trees are beginning to show some color. Our resident groundhog made an appearance one warmish day, but promptly went underground again when it got cold. Hang in there -- spring will come -- later rather than sooner.

April has been called the cruelest month, but I think it has become the busiest month. It began this year with spring break and religious holidays, including Earth Day, National Wildlife Week and National Poetry Month. Environmentalists were out in full force calling attention to global warming and climate change. A group called Step It Up 2007 designated April 14 a National Day of Climate Action. Rallies were held in 50 states and in Westchester, Putnam and Rockland counties, to put pressure on federal lawmakers to enact laws cutting carbon emissions 80% by 2050. For more information, visit www.stepitup2007.org.

Meanwhile, League work goes on apace. Our attention is now focussed on the two conventions: New York State, May 18 - 20, at Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains; and LWV of Westchester on Thursday, June 7 at New York Life Building in Sleepy Hollow. LWV NYS has sent its Registration Kit to all local league presidents. It can be accessed on-line at www.lwvny.org. Lots of good information in the Kit including Agenda, Fee Schedule, info on workshops and events. Be sure to check out the Silent Auction pages -- great stuff to bid on.

We are also preparing for our Westchester League's Convention on June 7: Meeting begins at 9:30am, Buffet Lunch at 12Noon. We are very pleased that our luncheon speaker will be Herb Pinder, Editorial Page Editor of the Journal News, and creator of LoHud's Community Conversation, interactive forums and blogs. Herb will describe the very latest in newspaper technology.

Making news this month are Leaguers Erin Malloy and Noreen Fisher. Former president of LWV of Westchester, Erin won the race for Mayor of Irvington -- sweet success after having lost two years ago on a technicality. Noreen resigned her position as Voter Service Chair for LWV of Westchester in order to become Mayor of Scarsdale. Penultimate president Joy Rosenzweig is now working for Assemblyman Adam Bradley. And Roberta Wiernik, another former president, was named LWVNYS Natural Resources specialist. Congratulations to all -- we are proud of you!

Rosemary

Thank You for your Decades of Service! Celebrating National Volunteer Week

LWVUS would like to thank ALL League volunteers who do the hands-on work to safeguard democracy. No other volunteer-based group has the local, state, and national reputation of the League, and we are thrilled to celebrate the contributions of all our volunteer leaders. April 15th kicks off National Volunteer Week, so I am taking this opportunity to express my appreciation to all our Westchester County League volunteers. We all make up the organization that makes democracy work!

Mary G. Wilson, Pres., LWVUS

LWW LIST OF OFFICERS – 2006

President	Rosemary MacLaughlin
First VP	Adelaide DiGiorgi
2 nd VP	Noreen Fisher
3 rd VP	Kitt Rosenthal
Treasurer	Sydelle Herzberg
Secretary	Felice Kaufman
Directors:	Ina Aronow
	Renee Baylor
	Laura Fratt
	Mary Beth Gose
	Janet Jaidi
	Claire Prohl
	Karen Schatzel
	Selma Thackeray

CHILDREN'S ISSUES - Selma Thackeray

Last Tuesday I met with Judith Myers, county legislator from Mamaroneck/Larchmont, who is chairperson of the Family, Health and Human Services Committee of the county legislature. Following are some points from that interview that are relevant to our concerns regarding children's issues.

1. Child Protective Services - undergoing organizational restructuring after some cases had tragic endings a couple of years ago. The work load for CPS workers is being reduced and a weighting system according to complexity of cases is being implemented. In 2006, 23 new caseworkers were hired; in 2007, so far, an additional 17 have been hired. Yonkers is adopting a new reporting system based on children's unexplained absences from school. This, along with the so-called "Bedford Effect" (making school administrators more diligent about reporting suspected cases of child abuse), will increase the caseload greatly, making these new hires even more necessary in order to cope with the demand.

2. CPS staff support - escorts are being trained to accompany caseworkers when they have to go to ostensibly dangerous neighborhoods. Sixteen escorts have been hired so far, freeing up 16 social workers who previously had paired up with partners for safety's sake. In addition, a program called "Connections" is being implemented to better share information among the many counties in NYState. In Westchester, a pilot program with a team approach to family engagement is being explored, while teaming to share and discuss cases, as in case conferences or grand rounds is also being tried.

3. Child care scholarship program - an attempt to get money to help families at the margin of eligibility for day care services. So far, 70 families have been served and more will be included in the next budget's scholarship fund. The money will go directly to the day care providers, as it has been earmarked for this specific purpose.

4. Children with special needs - program mandated by IDEA (the Federal "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act") is funded by the county. It is a good program, but costs are rising and more funding from the state is needed.

5. Day care slots - report of a study on why there remain empty slots in day care was presented on April 10th. I was unable to attend, but will follow up as indicated.

NATURALIZATION COURT – Sue Weisfeld, Bronxville LWV

I wanted you all to know about my lovely experience recently at Naturalization Court.

It was a pouring, windy, cold dismal day and I got to the Courthouse sopping wet. No other organizations were represented (usually there is at least one) to welcome the new citizens at the end of the ceremony, so I was the only person sitting in the front row. I spent the few minutes before the ceremony getting warm and dry and then looked around. There was quiet excitement, as always. The people were slightly dressed up, and many had children and other family members with them.

When the judge started to speak I was caught up in the happiness and solemnity of the occasion. I am also a naturalized citizen and I am extremely grateful for having had the opportunity to become a citizen, and hope that I always will be worthy of this privilege.

The judge introduced County Clerk Tim Itoni and then said there was an honored guest present: Susan Weisfeld of the Bronxville League of Women Voters. I almost fell off my chair! He then proceeded to speak about the League and how we help people make responsible decisions during the voting process. He also invited everyone to ask me, or contact the League, for information on any aspect of the election process. Wow! It felt wonderful to hear that, and to know that I was part of the League. After the ceremony, every one of the 96 new citizens came up to me to get a flag, a booklet on new citizens' rights, and also to say hello.

The new citizens came from every continent: from Canada and Mexico, from the Caribbean, from South America, Australia, Africa and Europe. There were several people from Jamaica, India and England, one from Armenia, two from Kosovo and one from Uzbekistan. Those from Latin America were from El Salvador, Mexico, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Ecuador -- where I was born. It was just a wonderful, wonderful diverse mix!

I hope everyone in the League will get the chance to experience this happiest of civic occasions. Thanks to you all for giving me the opportunity to go. Although the sun never even hinted at coming out, there was nothing but sunshine in that courtroom last Wednesday!!

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Non-Profit Org.

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League of Women Voters of Westchester
White Plains Mall, 200 Hamilton Ave., White Plains, NY 10601

IMPORTANT DATES

May 3	9:30 AM	LWW Executive Board Meeting	Com.Unitarian Ch. 468 Rosedale Ave White Plains
May 19	9AM-2PM	Compost Bin Sale	Saxon Woods Pool & Park White Plains
May 18-20		LWVNYS Convention	Crowne Plaza Hotel White Plains
JUN 7	9:30 AM	LWW Convention	NY Life Ins Bldg Sleepy Hollow