

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE

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

MARCH 2009

BULLETIN

ISSUE SIX

The League of Women Voters of Westchester
invites you to the
Annual Breakfast with the County Executive



The Honorable Andrew Spano



Friday, March 13, 2009
9:30 AM

White Plains Public Library
Auditorium, Second Floor



Come discuss important issues facing Westchester County



*The League of Women Voters of Bronxville
invites you and your friends to its
Annual Meeting and Luncheon*

Guest Speaker:

Janine Rose, News Director, Channel 12

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Board Meeting: 10 AM (Members)

Luncheon: 12 Noon

Lake Isle Country Club

660 White Plains Road

Eastchester



(See inside for details and reservations)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

March is off to a snowy start. But shovel yourself out in time for the March 13th Breakfast with County Executive Spano scheduled at the White Plains Library auditorium at 9:30 a.m. It is open to all.

On Tuesday, March 24th, there will be a countywide informational meeting on the NPV study, at the White Plains Library's 2nd floor Room B at 10:00 a.m. It is open to all League members

And, be sure to sign up to join Janine Rose, News Director with News12 Westchester, at our annual luncheon on April 30th at Lake Isle. The luncheon fee is \$35.00 and will be preceded by our Annual meeting, where we will be voting for our new slate of officers and the budget for the coming fiscal year. See more details on page 4.

Carolie Mullan, LWVUS Board liaison, sent the following to our New York State League president, Martha Kennedy for distribution to Local Leagues:

"The LWVUS board has decided to suspend publication of the National Voter (paper and digital) until the League's finances are healthier. LWVUS does plan to do everything possible in these difficult times to find ways to deliver information to members and leaders, as well as supporters. More and more information is available in the online Weekly Update. Comments and questions can be sent to Board Member Nancy Eitrem at neitrem@speakeasy.net.

The LWVUS Board also adopted new legislative priorities for 2009. Setting these priorities (based on member input solicited by LWVUS) lets the national League focus limited resources on those issues where the League can have meaningful impact and where there is member interest and opportunity for progress.

Global Climate Change and Health Care will be the top legislative priorities for the upcoming year – issues on which major congressional action is expected and on which the LWVUS will seek to be an active player.

Tier two priorities are **Election Reform and DC Voting Rights** – issues that will be acted upon if significant success is possible, although top priorities will take precedence.

LWVUS will only act on tier three issues if good opportunities present themselves and there is no pressing action on top priority and tier two issues at the time. Tier Three issues are Campaign Finance Reform; CEDAW (the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women); Civil Liberties; Ethics; and Redistricting."

I have been urged to recommend that you frequently visit the LWVUS' website (LWV.org) to keep current on League happenings. I had been sending our National President Mary Wilson's weekly updates to those of you I have email addresses for, but much of the detail is duplicated from week to week. So, sign on, check the site and keep informed!

In order to continue the good work of the Bronxville League, a dues increase is in the offing. At our current membership rate, after we make our per member payment to LWVUS (now \$29.20 per individual member) and \$18.00 to the New York State League, along with \$2.00 to the County League, we are left with 80 cents for our local work. Sadly, that doesn't even buy a cup of coffee these days.

You can send your comments on the matter to: BronxvilleLeague@aol.com, or mail the tear off to P.O. Box 321, Bronxville, NY. 10708-0321. We will also discuss it at the March coffee. I hope to see you there.

Adelaide

HEALTH ISSUES

This new administration is really encouraging grass roots involvement in our government- a promising development for those of us who would like to help make some changes and see greater transparency at the top. To cite a few areas which are currently distressing:

Pre-emption ... In February 2008 the Supreme Court ruled that FDA marketing approval shields device makers from liability even when patients are injured by defective or inadequately labeled medical devices. Public Citizen (among others) have urged lawmakers to pass a bill that would re-establish the rights of patients to sue.

The Arbitration trap .. Nursing home residents, among many other groups, are currently bound by "binding mandatory arbitration" clauses buried in the fine print of the contracts they sign for service which effectively deprive them of access to the court system in a dispute. Public Citizen is driving legislation to ban such clauses.

The Provider Conscience rule ... Eight states and several private groups have asked federal courts to throw out the Bush administration Provider Conscience rule which allows healthcare workers to refuse to participate in any activities they find morally objectionable (Medpage Today,1/19/09). That applies to any employee involved, including those who wash medical instruments, and lets them decide for themselves which activities (such as emergency contraception to rape victims) they will or will not support.

Medicare by geography ... It may surprise you how much Medicare coverage varies nation-wide based solely on geography. This is a national program but re-imburement decisions are made by 15 separate regional contractors around the country. a back-when concession to fears about "socialized medicine". As a result, CyberKnife, for example, a new but fast growing radiation treatment for prostate cancer, is re-imbursed by only 33 states. CyberKnife takes five days instead of the eight weeks needed for conventional radiation and is considerably cheaper. No one yet knows how effective it is long term or even whether what it delivers is adequate to begin with, but that, apparently, is not the relevant consideration. (NY Times- 12/2009)

Quality gaps ... Medicare patients are 27% less likely to die at the nation's top rated hospitals than at others. So says HealthGrades, a for-profit ranking company which compiles and sells quality reports on hospitals and physicians. The company's annual Hospital Quality and Clinical Excellence Study designated 270 of 5000 acute care hospitals as "Distinguished Hospitals for Clinical Excellence" (with Minnesota & Maryland having the highest percentage of same). (MedPage Today - 1/27/09) This is not a legislative issue per se but it certainly involves quality assurance which is monitored at a state level.

There are more issues out there than the League can possibly focus on but we certainly have choices. 2009 could be a good year.

Edith Szold, Health Issues Chair

A RECOMMENDED DUES INCREASE

The President's letter describes what our League has to pay to National, State, and Westchester Leagues. Do we benefit? Yes. Do we all always see the benefits? No. Much funding (at all levels) has gone into developing internet communication and capabilities. For the coming year, the \$.80/ individual and \$1.20/household that LWVBronxville receives from dues is totally insufficient to cover our most basic operating and legal (taxes) expenses. While we will continue to look to members and friends for their generous support, the Board has recognized the need to raise dues and reluctantly recommends an increase to \$60 for individuals and \$90 for households.

We ask all members to vote "Yes" or "No" on this proposal by March 23, 2009. Email responses can be sent to patharriss@verizon.net or call: 337-5015. Or use the tear-off below and mail to LWV Bronxville, PO Box 321, Bronxville, NY 10708.

____ Yes, I accept the new dues increase

____ No, I do not accept the new dues increase

Name _____

Tel. No. or email _____

Address _____

Comments _____

The League of Women Voters of Bronxville

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

invites you and your friends to its

Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Guest Speaker

JANINE ROSE

News Director, Channel 12

Topic: To be Announced in Next Bulletin

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Board Meeting: 10:00 AM (members)

Luncheon: 12:00 Noon

***Lake Isle Country Club
660 White Plains Road
Eastchester***



Name _____

Address _____

Please reserve _____ seats at \$35 per person

(Please circle your luncheon choice: chicken or pasta primavera)

I would like to be a Sponsor of the League (includes special recognition)

Please reserve _____ seats at \$50 per person

I would like to be a Patron of the League (includes special recognition)

Please reserve _____ seats at \$75 per person

I cannot attend but enclose \$ _____ to support the League's activities

Send reservation form and check made out to LWV of Bronxville to:

***Pat Parker
9 Knox Road
Eastchester, NY 10709***

News From *Your* State League

Update from LWNYS

March 2009

Call to Convention 2009

In addition to your Convention delegation of seasoned League leaders, why not send a few newer members, as either delegates or observers. Convention is a great learning experience for any Leaguer to experience the League way of doing things, learn more about our issues, and network with other Leaguers.

This year, we will offer a bonus day of workshops on Friday, May 15th, entitled Strengthening League Leadership. This special program is designed to give you valuable tools for strengthening your League. We encourage leagues to send board members to these workshops even if they are not delegates or attending State Convention. Travel to Syracuse a little earlier to take part!

Citizen Education: Programs for Youth

Civic participation is a core value of the LWV. Convention 2009 will include an opportunity to learn about the types of programs your local League can implement to help high school students in your area to become more civically involved.

This year's **Students Inside Albany Conference** will be held Sunday, April 19 – Wednesday, April 22, 2009 in Albany, NY. This program is designed to increase high school students' awareness of their responsibilities in representative government and provide information about tools that will help them meet those responsibilities. Choose a student to represent your League at this very important program for youth. **LeaderSpark** programs have been completed by Buffalo/Niagara, Schenectady, Saratoga, and Smithtown Leagues, thanks to the hard work of these Leagues and their community partners. Smithtown has secured funding for a second program scheduled to begin in March, and Saugerties is planning to begin their first program early next year.

Coastal Pollution

In New York State, coastal pollution must be fought on two fronts: the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes. Our goal is to turn back the decline of the Atlantic as a source of jobs, revenue, wildlife, and natural beauty. Toward that goal, officials will release a comprehensive plan for ecosystem-based management of the Great Lakes and Atlantic coasts, which will address land and water uses, economy, climate change, energy, and building capacity.

The situation is serious. New York State's commercial and recreational fisheries have only 21 percent of their value 50 years ago. Nationally, 32 percent of all monitored beaches had closings or advisories in 2007 compared with 23 percent a decade earlier. Hard clam production on Long Island is down from 700,000 bushels a year to fewer than 10,000 bushels. Despite these alarming statistics, Governor Paterson has proposed cutting Environmental Protection Fund money for oceans and Great Lakes from \$5 million to \$2 million for the coming year.

Pay Equity Update

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was the very first bill signed into law by President Obama. It restores the 1964 Civil Rights Act equal-pay protections for people whose jobs involve the same work. Unfortunately the Ledbetter Act does not address pay inequities across different but equally-valued job titles. The NY State Fair Pay Act (A3911, S955) addresses this problem by removing discrimination in job titles traditionally done by women and people of color. We need to build support in both the Labor Committee and the Senate as a whole. Check the March 2009 SBR for the names of the Senators who are co-sponsors of this legislation and thank them, and urge the others to come on board.

It's Lobbying Season!

When you make lobbying visits this spring, remember to inform your legislators of the LWNYS Legislative Agenda and, even if he/she doesn't agree with our position, keep the lines of communication open.

Sprawl and Land Use

The LWNYS urges New York State to take a proactive role in regional land use planning. To further that goal, we have joined Empire State Future, a coalition of groups and individuals interested in advancing the principles of "smart growth". In addition to providing educational materials that will augment the efforts of land use activists, this coalition plans to provide the public with a website that is informative, up-to-date, lively, and easy to use.

A statewide Community Preservation Act (S381) was reintroduced on January 7, 2009. It would allow cities and towns to create community protection funds to protect open space, support working farms, and preserve community character.

The State Smart Growth Infrastructure Policy Act (A543) was reintroduced in 2009. During the last legislative session, this bill was considerably watered down and the governor refused to sign it. The 2009 version attempts to define smart growth principles clearly and requires state agencies to base funding on these principles.

NPV Resources

Complete resources for the NPV Study are now online. You'll find a background paper, pro/con arguments, suggested resources list, a study guide, consensus questions, and a consensus response form.

In addition, any member can join the NPV Study Discussion List. All you need is an email address where postings can be sent. Just log in at <https://member.lwv.org/Login.asp>

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GET INVOLVED!



BULLETIN

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Date Sensitive

IMPORTANT DATES

MAR 10	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Open Board Meeting	Bronxville Women's Club
MAR 13	9:30 AM	Breakfast with County Executive Spano	White Plains Library
MAR 17	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Monthly Coffee Meeting	Bronxville Women's Club
MAR 24	10:00 SM	LWV NPV Informational Meeting	White Plains Library

SAVE THE DATE!!!

BRONXVILLE LWV ANNUAL LUNCHEON
APRIL 30TH AT LAKE ISLE COUNTRY CLUB