

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE

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

MAY 2009

BULLETIN

ISSUE EIGHT

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!



*Come March With Us at the MEMORIAL DAY PARADE
Monday, May 25, 2009
8:30 AM - Parkway Road at the Circle*

BRONXVILLE LWV MONTHLY COFFEE

*Tuesday, May 19
9:30 AM
Bronxville Women's Club
135 Midland Avenue*



Our UN Liaison, Martha Chatterjee, will give us a report on the relationship between the League and the UN how we work behind the scenes in partnership with the United Nations current goals, especially regarding human rights of women and children. The UN is changing and the NGOs are part of this change. Other current goals we are working to support are adequate housing, access to water, responsible actions on the environment, ending the practice of kidnapping children to be used as child soldiers, and education concerning democratic principles when asked for help in this regard.

PRESIDENTS' LETTER

It's with great pleasure and pride that we write our first Presidents' letter. Dual presidents are unusual for the Bronxville Leaguea situation which reminds me of Tallulah Bankhead's suggestion to George Bernard Shaw that they procreate a child. "Imagine", she gushed. "My looks and your brains!" "Madame", he replied. "Imagine my looks and your brains." We trust the Harriss/Szold alliance will be more predictable and give you the best of each of us. We will certainly try!

We'd like to begin by addressing one of the League's major concerns: the loss of membership and the unspoken anxiety that inspires about our future. We do have a diminished presence amidst the sound bites and information overload and sensationalism that's offered up as sense. But think of our forebears - the Suffragists, parading proudly for the right to vote, demanding the chance to join the political process and have their voices heard and finally attended to. The first Leaguers probably came from among their ranks - educated women of means, confounding the conventions of their times with their competence and knowledge. The League was their best, or maybe only, road to political influence and power.

Today, as the League approaches its 90th anniversary in 2010, women have so many roads through which to get ahead: in business, the professions, and as elected officials themselves. Now, the League is only one option and, in that sense, it is less important. However, in terms of its identity and its purpose, the League is more important now than ever. We study issues, untangle the gnarls of prejudice and self-interest to reach the facts, and decide, based on the common good, the positions for which we'll advocate. We are in nobody's pocket and never can be. And, true to our goals, we want every citizen to vote and we work hard to bring that about. But we also try to ensure, to the best of our ability, that every voter understands what he or she is voting for. And that is even harder!

This is not the stuff of titillating drama but it is the stuff of thoughtful living, caring, and integrity which our world will always need and, hopefully, continue to respect. Here's to a good and healthy summer. We look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Edith Szold & Pat Harriss

PS – A very special welcome to our new board member, Connie Partridge.

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE CONSENSUS

At our April coffee, our League held a consensus meeting about the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact study initiated by LWVUS. After a lively and thoughtful discussion led by our outgoing president, Adelaide DiGiorgi, and Mary Beth Gose, president of the Westchester League, our local league reached a consensus in support of pursuing the NPV compact. We reported our results (including comments) to National. The next step in the consensus process is for National to tally the results (and comments) of all participating Leagues. Their NPV Committee determines consensus and formulates a position which is reported to the LWVUS Board and adopted by the Board. This is scheduled for the June 11, 2009 Council meeting.



OUR ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON



On April 30th, our Annual Meeting and Luncheon was held at Lake Isle Country Club in the Patio Room, a new and pleasant venue for us. Thanks to Pat Parker for the arrangements and to Dorothy Brennan for the flowers. Our guest speaker was Janine Rose, the News Director of Cable NEWS 12. As a speaker, Janine is a winner! She had her audience in her hand as she covered her past 20



year career, including many breaking news and events from our area. Her enthusiasm, candor and inclusive manner were refreshingly upbeat. She welcomed the many informative and stimulating questions from the audience. The video of the presentation will be shown on Bronxville Cable. Check your local cable listing for channel and times.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE

1 APRIL 2009

LIST OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

CO-PRESIDENTS:	Pat Harriss	2009-2011
	Edith Szold	2009-2011
FIRST VICE PRES:	Irma Moore	2009-2011
TREASURER:	Mary Nicolis	2008-2010
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Julia Pomeroy	2009-2011

DIRECTORS

Alice Clapp	2008-2010
Adelaide DiGiorgi	2009-2011
Janet Jaidi	2009-2011
Pat Parker	2008-2010
Connie Partridge	2009-2011
Birgitta Sherman	2008-2010

OFF BOARD

Denise Berthier
Dorothy Brennan
Martha Chatterjee
Amanda Moore
Sue Weisfeld

NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2010

Dorothy Brennan, Chair
Martha Chatterjee
Sue Weisfeld

ANNUAL PORTFOLIO CHAIR REPORTS

Voters Service – Irma Moore

In the late summer and fall of 2008, the LWV of Bronxville helped the LWV of Westchester to gather information from local and county candidates for publication in the annual Westchester Voters Guide. We distributed 14,000 Guides and an additional 300 copies of the State Voters Guide from the LWNYS with information about State and National candidates and ballot issues. These were sent to members, donors, and distributed to the public throughout Bronxville, Tuckahoe, Crestwood, Eastchester, Mount Vernon and Yonkers.



In the early fall, we held three student registration drives: one at Sarah Lawrence College and two at Concordia College. Over 100 students registered to vote. We also registered voters and distributed information and absentee ballots to residents of local assisted living facilities and to members of PTAs in Mount Vernon.

Three candidates meetings were held this fall: one for primary candidates in Eastchester in August, and one for Eastchester candidates for Town Council and the State Assembly and Senate in October, and one at Sara Lawrence for Yonkers candidates for the State Assembly and Senate and for U.S. Congress in October. Approximately 100 people attended each event.

Our League also continued to participate in gathering information from candidates for SmartVoter, the free on-line comprehensive election guide that provides an opportunity for candidates to post information about themselves and their positions, and for the public to learn more about the election process.

Special thanks go to President Adelaide DiGiorgi, Janet Jaidi, Alice Clapp, Connie Partridge, Connie Vance, and Sue Weisfeld for their participation in Voters Service activities, and to all the members and friends who worked on the distribution of the Voters Guide.

Program – Susan Weisfeld

It is always a challenge and very rewarding to put together programs for our League. This year, after poor attendance at our November program, it was decided not to do any more community programs in the evening, except in conjunction with another organization such as Sarah Lawrence College. This is not an irrevocable decision, but seemed appropriate for the Spring months of 2009.



The evening program in November, highlighting Rehabilitation in the Arts, was terrific. This is a multi-arts program in maximum security prisons and the speaker, Katherine Vokins described the theatre, poetry, writing and dance programs. She also showed a beautiful and moving video of several modern jazz dances performed by inmates in Wallkill Correctional Facility. A former inmate also spoke about how the program changed his life and how he now works with an at-risk population. A third speaker, Sabina Kaplan, described her work in this area at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. The audience was enthralled and the message was very powerful.

Unfortunately, the turnout was small and it was disappointing that we had both a poor showing and a lack of video coverage due to a conflict in the Village.

Our holiday program had a nice turnout, but it was slightly less than in previous years. The scheduled speaker, Human Rights Commissioner Delores Braithwaite, cancelled at the last minute due to personal reasons, but her assistant gave an excellent presentation. An unexpected guest speaker, State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, came to speak about her personal battle against discrimination. The unplanned second speaker made the program a bit long, but in general the talks were well received by the audience.

We also had two very interesting coffee speakers, and I feel there was a better-than-average attendance for these events. The first program involved the "55 Plus Connection" with speaker Cathy Elser. It was very informative and emphasized the Yonkers area of our League coverage. The second coffee program involved identity theft, especially when people over 50 are targeted. Two speakers came from the Wartburg Home in Mt. Vernon and they were excellent. We learned a great deal and perhaps were even comforted to know that there were things we easily could do to protect ourselves.

We did not sponsor the Sarah Lawrence Women's History Department conference on Muslim Women, but we did promote it. My attendance resulted in some new contacts and also reinforced our connection to Sarah Lawrence. The college recognizes our value as a community resource, and we appreciate their help with our programs.

I'm always open to suggestions and ideas. I think programs are an important way to let the community know we are involved in many issues, so I'm happy to keep trying. Thanks, as always, for your encouragement and support.

Membership – Birgitta Sherman

The Bronxville LWV numbered 137 members as of March 31, 2009. The membership tally is: 8 National Members, 91 Individual Local Memberships and 19 Household Local memberships. This compares to 8 National, 89 Individual and 12 Household Memberships on March 31, 2008. We are glad to see that the number of Household Local memberships has increased nicely and hope that this trend will continue.



I made League material concerning voting available before the 2008 election in Eastchester Town Hall, Tuckahoe and Bronxville Village Halls, in the Eastchester, Tuckahoe and Bronxville libraries as well as in the Tuckahoe Community Center. Once the election was over, I substituted general material about the League for the election specific material, and hope that reading our brochures will be an incentive to join the League.

I think that our members find the the League offers educational and stimulating programs as well as an opportunity to learn about and to weigh the pros and cons of the study group topics – most recently the method of electing the US president. I hope that we will see our membership grow in the year ahead.

Development – Pat Harriss

Given the severe financial distress in the fall of 2008, our annual fund drive was a success, raising \$2,520. Slightly above budget but below last year's total. We mailed 220-240 letters and received donations from 54 (average amount, \$46.66) A significant goal for the 2009-10 fund drive is to increase the number of names on our mailing list. If we do, the probability is that we will exceed the budget target of \$2,000.



Health Issues – Edith Szold

Health reform has long been of interest to the League but only in this last year has the issue exploded as a popular, political cause. Here in Bronxville, we have shared aspects of it with our members through the Health Issues column of our monthly bulletin. We reviewed Westchester County Services, in print and at a "Coffee" with County legislator Lois Bronz, and at the county level, got a multichapter committee up and running to reinforce one another's efforts. At the Committee's recommendation, the LWVW co-sponsored a program last February, with the "Access to Health Care Coalition" on the need for single payer universal health insurance, and we will doubtless co-sponsor their next one coming up soon. "Now that the new state budget is in place as, hopefully, the national one will be as well, we will be able to review and evaluate the impacts of each on health care reform. In this we anticipate the help of "insiders" at a "Coffee" and/or larger forum in the fall."



The Treasurer's Report was given by Mary Nicolis and the Nominating Committee Report, by Dorothy Brennan.



HEALTH ISSUES

The Swine Flu- or tales about it - are sweeping over us. On April 26th, the US government declared a Health Emergency even though the top global flu experts admittedly had too little info to go on. (NY Times, 4/27/09) Since then, there have been over 300 school closings across the country, including several in Westchester, emergency rooms have been besieged, and medical offices flooded with calls and frightened patients. As of May 3rd, however, there were only 160 confirmed cases in the US, according to Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health, on "Meet the Press" , and no deaths.. (The number of cases has since increased, probably more than we know. Only two laboratories, in Atlanta, Georgia and Winnipeg in Canada are presently equipped to confirm suspected cases.) Given that no-one knows how fast or how far this flu might spread, or if it will become more severe, the government is stocking up on Tamiflu (preparing for seasonal flu in the fall) and working to develop a new vaccine. What to do if you feel sick in the meantime? Stay home, call your doctor, and let him or her decide. And, as always, take the usual precautions.

What we know for sure, courtesy in part of Swine Flu, is how impossibly stretched our health care system is with respect to basic care. It's not only nurses (and the nurses to teach them) but doctors as well. Physicians are needed most in primary care. In terms of earnings, however, that's about the lowest rung on the medical ladder and the typical young physician graduates \$140,000 in debt. Raising the reimbursement for primary care may, according to some speculation, be at the expense of the specialists lest the total cost of care increase. (There's that elephant in the room again - the insurance companies and HMO's.) National health, like national literacy, drinkable water, and breathable air is a social responsibility, not just another business opportunity and we ignore that fact at our peril.

We have ignored it on many levels, creating personal debt for medical care, great enough to drive many folks, insured or not, into bankruptcy. This is not news. What is news is the business that's created: the full time handling of other people's medical billing coverage disputes, for a fee (NY Times, 4/25/09). Fortunately, a similar service exists, at no charge, through the NY Attorney General's Health Care Helpline. Call 1-800-428-9071 or 518-474-8376 or WWW.OAG.STATE.NY.US. If a debt collection agency gets in the picture, check with the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization. www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs27-debtcoll.htm.

On April 13th, six of us from the LWVW Committee on Health Issues met with Adam Bradley, of the NYS Assembly, for some insights into the new NYS budget as it impacts health care. This was arranged by Ellen Blauner, one of our committee members, who volunteers with his office. I wanted to share his views because they resonate so well with those of the League. He gave us a generous hour and a half, which was much appreciated.

In responding to our questions, Bradley was careful to present the complex issues involved in a meaningful and positive way. He saw the thrust of the governor's budget as pushing more money into preventive care, and preserving programs and unique facilities (such as Blythedale, for which Bradley fought) which the federal cuts to Medicaid would have devastated.

The budget increases the re-imbursement for some basic services for children, for example, such as dental services for those under 21, and expands some features of the Early Intervention program. It permanently extends the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention Program. It also preserves and modernizes the EPIC program and streamlines access to Family Health Plus (FHP)

It invests more in ambulatory and outpatient services (as opposed to in-patient) and creates a Statewide Health Care Home Program to improve patient care continuity and coordination of health services. 6000 nursing home beds, for instance, will be replaced over the next 5 years with 6000 assisted living beds.

With respect to IT, it provides incentives for e-prescribing to reduce medication errors (although not for a state wide data base for evidence based diagnostic and treatment protocols). However, funding for a telemedicine demonstration program was eliminated and the opening of the Adirondack Medical Home - another demonstration program - was postponed.

Bradley did not review specific changes made by the Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century (Berger Commission) but they seem to be on-going. A major impediment to health care reform, as he sees it, is the extraordinary power of the drug companies and health insurance industry, universally acknowledged but so far, unchallenged. Each has contracts with consumers (i.e. Medicare Drug plans, HMO's); and each can unilaterally change the terms of those contracts for their benefit. Drug Plans alter their formularies midstream; HMO's increase their premiums or reduce their coverage (retroactively in many states, though not New York). Accept or they don't renew and good luck finding something better. Reining them in with stronger regulation must be a priority. In conclusion, Bradley sees a single payer public plan as the only viable option for Health Care reform. As to what we can do, he suggests partnering with other organizations, especially non-medical groups, working toward the same ends.

Edith Szold, Health Issues Chair

News From *Your* State League

Update from LWNYS

May 2009

Big League Raffle

The Big League Raffle has returned! This is primarily a fundraiser for your state League. But did you know your local League gets a rebate for every ticket you sell? Remember, too, that the more tickets are sold, the bigger the prizes are! Selling to your friends and neighbors is fun and easy – a great way to help the League!

You should have received your initial packet of 10 tickets in the mail. If you think you can sell more, contact Stephanie in the LWNYS office (phone 518-465-4162 or email Stephanie@lwvny.org). She will gladly send you as many tickets as you think you might sell. Be sure to fill in the name of your local League in the bottom line of each stub so your League will get credit for the sale.

Silent Auction Bidding

You don't have to be at Convention to bid (and win!) in the Silent Auction! Just complete a Silent Auction Bid Form for each item you want to bid on and submit it by email, fax, postal mail, or telephone to the League office by May 11, 2009. The form and photos and description of items are available on the state League website. Take a look and submit a bid!

LWNYS Tightens Belt

The LWNYS will suspend publication of the hard copy paper version of the *State Voter* following the April 2009 issue. The LWNYS Staff and Board are doing their part to minimize expenditures. Still there has been a significant decrease in funds to support our work. Please support our efforts to increase income by supporting our Big League Raffle and Silent Auction.

Advocating League Positions

Advocacy continues until the end of the legislative session, which is June 30. To take part, check the "Take Action" and "Advocacy" sections of the LWNYS website several times a week for the latest alerts and how you can help. It's convenient and quick!

Natural Resources

The **Bigger Better Bottle Bill** has passed after seven years of advocacy! Though not perfect, it includes important requirements: deposits extended to bottled water, 80% of unclaimed deposits to be returned to the general fund, increased handling fee for retailers, and assistance for private, non-profits, and municipal entities.

A state-wide effort has begun to implement the LWVUS Action Packet on **Climate Change**. First steps include a Letters to the Editor campaign to increase grassroots awareness and asking people to sign onto our letters to our Senators urging firm caps on greenhouse gas emissions.

A knowledgeable member of the Broome-Tioga League has agreed to monitor **Gas Drilling** issues for us. The DEC will hold hearings on its proposed regulations concerning gas drilling. The LWV is asking that the time period and locations for these hearings be increased.

Voter Service/Elections

The 2009 elections are "off year" elections, with only local elections taking place. That is, everywhere in the state except New York City, where they face a contentious mayoral election with national visibility.

The rest of the state must wait until 2010 for exciting elections. Everyone except the President and local officials will face election. The LWNYS expects to be able to cover statewide offices in the Voter's Guide for 2010. We will also be discussing the role the LWV will play in organizing debates for statewide candidates.

It's **Census** time again! Results of the 2010 Census will be used in the redistricting and apportionment that will take effect for the 2012 elections. The League can help by drawing public attention to the process and taking action on relevant League positions.

Transportation

The Legislature restored \$20 million to the upstate transit fund for 2009-2010. All of the federal stimulus funds for transportation are flexible – how they are used will depend on what effective pressure is applied. Local Leagues are encouraged to find out what the real transportation needs are in your area and apply pressure to get them funded.

Sprawl and Land Use

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has suggested that local communities take a pledge to reduce their impact on climate change. A key part of the pledge encourages land use planning that promotes a gentle impact on our climate.

Health Care Update

The 2009-2010 NYS Budget includes major health access provisions, expands public insurance coverage for New Yorkers in need, and increases accountability in the charity care system for the uninsured.

Updated LWNYS Website

Everyone who logs onto our newly updated website will be greeted with a visually more appealing and user friendly home page. It even includes a search engine to help you find what you're looking for.

We hope you enjoy the new banner of photos featuring local and state League activities. Help us keep it lively and up to date by sending your digital photos of local League activities to us at lwvny@lwvny.org.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

OF NEW YORK STATE

62 Grand Street

Albany, NY 12207-1403

(518) 465-4162

Fax (518) 465-0812

Web Address: www.lwvny.org

e-mail: lwvny@lwvny.org

GET INVOLVED!



BULLETIN

**NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
WHITE PLAINS, NY
PERMIT NUMBER 7724**

**League of Women Voters of Bronxville
P.O. Box 321, Bronxville, NY 10708
Co-Presidents: Pat Harriss
Edith Szold
Editor: Janet Jaidi**

**Printing and Mailing by JAWONIO
(Vocational Opportunities for
People with Disabilities)**

Date Sensitive

IMPORTANT DATES

MAY 12	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Open Board Meeting	Bronxville Women's Club
MAY 19	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Monthly Coffee Meeting	Bronxville Women's Club