

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

BEDFORD LEWISBORO NORTH SALEM

January/February 2011 Newsletter



A Chocolate Valentine

The League of Women Voters
of Bedford, Lewisboro, North Salem
and the Katonah Village Library
invite you to an

EVENING FILLED WITH CHOCOLATE DELIGHT

with a presentation by

PETER G. ROSE

Author, Food Historian, Columnist, Lecturer

"Chocolate: a Hudson Valley Romance"

Wednesday, February 9, 2011, 7:30 p.m.

Katonah Village Library
126 Bedford Road
Katonah, NY, 10536

Ms. Rose will speak on the history of chocolate and the Hudson Valley merchants' cacao trade during the 17th and 18th centuries, followed by a chocolate making demonstration and chocolate refreshments such as hot chocolate and a frozen *choc-tail*, together with various other chocolate goodies that will delight and entice the chocolate lover.

A raffle will be held at the event for a special basket of chocolate treats.
Ms. Rose's current books and chocolate related items will be available
for purchase.

Admission is \$15 with reservation, or \$20 at the door. Raffle tickets are \$5 each. Funds raised will help defray costs for producing local League's annual Voters Guide.

Please send check and reservation form to: LWW Bedford, Lewisboro, North Salem, P.O. Box 584, Goldens Bridge, NY, 10526

Name(s) _____

Phone # _____ e-mail address _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____ For information call Susan Auslander - 914 763 9747

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Tues 2/8 - Board Meeting: Bedford Village Library, 9:30 am. All members welcome.

Wed 2/9 – An Evening Filled With Chocolate Delight: Katonah Village Library, 7:30 pm. See information in this newsletter. Sure to be an interesting and delicious evening. Bring your families, neighbors & friends!

PRESIDENTS' LETTERS

Shakespeare said that April is the cruelest month, but I think January is. However, next week we will be into February, and we will be having our "evening filled with chocolate delight" on Wednesday, February 9. Our good friend Peter Rose will speak on the history of chocolate and how early Hudson Valley merchants brought this product to New Amsterdam. Following a demonstration of chocolate making, an assortment of chocolate refreshments will be served. Those of you who have attended Ms. Rose's previous demonstrations know that this will be a special treat. Raffle tickets will be available for a chocolate basket from L'Anjou Patisserie and a dinner for two at Crabtree's Kittle House. See the enclosed flyer for information on how to reserve for this event. Members and guests are welcome. *Snow date is Friday, February 11.*

Local leagues throughout Westchester County are planning to hold public forums on the issue of Redistricting in order to inform the public about the importance of redistricting and how it is done. Redistricting affects reapportionment, i.e. the shifting of lines to create election districts, often done in order to benefit a particular political party. Although some of the leagues will hold their own forums, the Westchester County league is looking into the possibility of a county-wide forum. More details will be sent as soon as they are available. In the meantime, you can find information on this topic on the www.lwvny.com website.

-- Rosemary MacLaughlin

*On Saturday, January 22 I attended a workshop sponsored by the LWV of Rye, Rye Brook, Port Chester on a program to engage those young people who will reach 18 before the next election. It was a demonstration of a way to encourage and involve those students, and also to combat voter apathy. I was shocked to learn that **40% of registered voters in the US fail to exercise their right to vote!***

We participated in a scripted program which gave an interactive history of voting in the U.S., with a mock election and an analysis of that election, suggestions on helping students to register, and encouraging civic participation. We watched a filmed demonstration of one of the VOTE 18 workshops at a school in Arizona, and the students certainly did get involved. They asked some tough questions of the political representatives present, and actively participated in spirited discussion.

The LWV of Rye, Rye Brook and Port Chester is very interested in getting involved with Vote 18. I found it very involving, particularly since I have a grandson almost 18, but it would take quite a bit of work and involvement of our members. Let me know if this is a project you would be interested in!

-- Del Bashkrow

STATE LEAGUE NEWS

2010 Election Survey: Machines Perform But Privacy Suffers

The League of Women Voters of New York State (League) today released the results of an online survey of voters' experiences using the new paper ballot optical scanning system that was implemented statewide for the 2010 election cycle. The online survey of 1,072 respondents, from 47 counties including all 5 counties of NYC, showed that the voting machines indeed did perform well; however, the respondents did make note of several inadequacies that the League feels must be addressed to ensure that voters are guaranteed a secure and private franchise. The League's recommendations for immediate action are listed below; the state Board of Elections should move to implement these recommendations before the next election cycle.

• Increased Voter Education on the Voting Process

The State Board of Elections must provide standard template materials which county boards of elections can tailor for their specific needs. Remaining HAVA funds should be used for this purpose.

• Increased Training for All Elections Personnel

The survey showed an immediate need for better trained election personnel. Legislation has passed permitting split shifts for election inspectors and recruitment of younger poll workers. These new laws need to be implemented.

• Revision of the Paper Ballot for Maximum Usability by Voters

There is an immediate need for improving the design of the ballot. Legislation to address the full-face ballot should be a legislative priority and should be introduced early in the 2011 Legislative Session.

• Privacy Issues

Over 20 percent said they did not have sufficient privacy in marking the ballot, scanning the ballot, or were not given a privacy sleeve or instructed how to use it. Poll workers need to be trained that any viewing of the markings on a completed ballot is a violation of the voter's privacy. As noted by League Elections Specialist, Aimee Allaud, "Improving ballot design, providing better trained poll workers and ensuring privacy in voting are fundamental to our voter electoral system. We must take immediate steps to resolve these problems."

"The League's Voter Survey shows that we need to do much, much more if we're to take full advantage of the State's new voting systems. In particular, the design of New York's ballot must be completely overhauled in order to be fully usable by voters." said Bo Lipari, the League's Technology Director. The full report is available on the League website: www.lwvny.org.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NYS 54th Biennial Convention

May 20-22, 2011

Desmond Hotel, Albany, New York

ZOGBY TO SPEAK: We have just learned that John Zogby, pollster of international repute and author of "The Way We'll Be", published in 2008, will be our Saturday night keynote speaker. *More information to come.*

NATIONAL LEAGUE NEWS

Statement on the Tucson Shootings from Elisabeth MacNamara, President, League of Women Voters of the United States:

Washington, DC – "The League of Women Voters joins with all Americans in expressing our shock and dismay at the tragic shootings in Tucson last weekend. We express our deep sorrow to the families of the victims, and offer our sincere hopes for the recovery of Representative Giffords and the other survivors. We applaud the courage of the individuals, thinking they were just out for a Saturday conversation, who took immediate action to help the injured and end the rampage.

"What can we make of this madness, this senseless act of violence? And terrible though this event was for all of us now, what might the long term effects be? Will it make public figures - politicians, media figures, celebrities - more mindful of the potentially harmful impact of their angry words - or will everyone continue to put their own agendas first, without regard to the climate they create? Will it make the public more trusting of the patriotic motivations of their elected leaders - or will respect for them be further diminished? Will it make our elected leaders more willing to reach out to meet and hear from their constituents directly - or will it reinforce the growing gap between voters and those they put in office? Will it allow Americans to feel comfortable and welcome in the public space - or will they conclude that it is safer to stay home and drop out of the conversation? It is clearly time for each of us to consider these issues, individually and as a community.

"For 90 years, the League has worked to facilitate the civil exchange of different points of view, to bridge the gap between the voters and the elected, and to help improve the functioning of government. We hope that moving forward our nation will come together to foster and strengthen the very essence of our representative democracy: 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.'"

February 2011 marks the 91st anniversary of the League of Women Voters.

A link to the storied history of the League:

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=90th_Anniversary&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=143&ContentID=14333

And a link to last year's accomplishments and reflections:

<http://www.lwv.org/AM/CustomSource/2010ElectionReflections/index.html>

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Washington, DC 20036-4508
Phone: 202-429-1965; fax: 202-429-0854

Website: www.lwv.org

To fill out a contact/feedback form: <https://member.lwv.org/ContactUs.asp>

State League:

Phone:(518) 465-4162; fax:(518) 465-0812

Website: www.lwvny.org

To fill out a contact/feedback form: <http://lwvny.org/contactForm.html>

County League:

200 Hamilton Avenue,White Plains Mall, White Plains, NY 10601
Phone: 914-949-0507; fax 914- 997-9354

email: LWVwestchester@verizon.net

Our Local League:

PO Box 584, Goldens Bridge, NY 10526

Del Bashkow: delkatonah@verizon.net;

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.