

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

BEDFORD LEWISBORO NORTH SALEM

June 2011 Newsletter

ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

The 45th Annual Meeting of the LWV of Bedford Lewisboro North Salem was held at La Camelia Restaurant on June 14, 2011. We had an enthusiastic turnout of members and guests including County Legislator Peter Harckham who represents District 2. Our Speaker was Lee Roberts, Supervisor of the Town of Bedford, who spoke on water quality and environmental issues concerning our area. Also attending was Marian Rose, Ph.D., Director of Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition (CWCWC), who suggested that the league join their coalition. Ms. Rose invited us to attend a meeting of her group on Monday, July 18, at Bronx Botanical Garden. Members agreed to form a new study committee on water issues, and all are invited to attend Ms. Rose's meeting. Details will be sent later.

We had an animated discussion about Voters Guides being online vs. mailed to local residents. We understand that some voters prefer to read the Voters Guide online and that will be available this year. But we will also have Voters Guides printed and mailed to registered voters in our area. It is an expensive undertaking, but we are concerned that residents who are accustomed to receiving the VG in their mailboxes would not be happy without it. It was pointed out that the Voters Guide is a signature piece for the LWV, and we fear that we will lose the support of the public and contributions which are sent to us annually by those voters who appreciate the VG. It was agreed that we would mail VG again this year, and it will be online as well for those who prefer that method.

Members approved a Local Program that includes working on the Voters Guide, organizing Candidates Forums and Voter Registration drives. Susan Henry would like to see voter registration in the local high schools, and it was suggested that we contact Social Studies teachers at John Jay HS, Fox Lane HS and at private schools in the area. We will set up a committee to work on these aspects of Voter Service.

A Budget for FY April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012 was approved and Special Reports were discussed. Dues will remain the same this year and there was no change in the By-Laws. A new slate of Officers and Directors was approved:

President	Rosemary MacLaughlin	2011-2012
1st Vice-President/Voters Service	Harry MacLaughlin	2010-2012
2 nd Vice President/Membership	Kay Tyler	2011-2013
Secretary	Katherine Dering	2010-2012
Treasurer	Thomas McKenna	2011-2013

Directors:	
Susan Auslander	2010-2012
Del Bashkow	2011-2013
Claudia Dovman	2011-2012
Diana Richter	2011-2013
Peter Rose	2011-2013

Off Board (one-year term):	
Bea Rhodes, Lisa Pizzurro (Bulletin Editor)	
Nominating Committee:	
Lisa Pizzurro, Chair	
Susan Henry	
Diane Kaplan	

STATE LEAGUE NEWS

THE 2011 STATE CONVENTION was a huge success with over 100 people from across the state attending. The delegates adopted the 2011-2012 budget, elected the new officers and Board for the state League, and adopted the current program/positions with no alterations or new studies. Attendees participated in a number of workshops or information sessions at which new or updated League materials were discussed. The attendees also heard from Albany County Executive Michael Breslin; author, former Governor of VT and former Ambassador to Switzerland Madeleine Kunin; and CEO/President and renowned pollster John Zogby. Workshop handouts are available at the State League's website: www.lwvny.org.

STATE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON REDISTRICTING:

The League is not a newcomer to this subject, having first proposed guidelines for redistricting in 1966. We believe that in addition to improving goals and criteria for the redistricting process, this is an opportunity to fundamentally change elections in New York State by removing the process from partisan influences. The drawing of district lines for legislative and Congressional district lines should not be done by legislators. The current process allows elected officials to choose their voters before the voters have a chance to choose them. It is in the self-interest of legislators and legislative leaders to preserve both the careers of individual legislators and the dominance of their political party. The resulting partisan gerrymandering has significantly reduced the rights of New Yorkers to be fairly represented and resulted in one of the highest rates of incumbents being reelected in the country.

We believe that an independent commission to draw the lines for legislative and Congressional districts can operate under existing state constitutional requirements. The members of the commission should be fairly chosen, nonpartisan, and reflect the diversity of the state. The lines should be drawn in a manner that does not favor any incumbent or political party, and under guidelines that provide for fair and effective representation of racial and language minorities. The process should be transparent and open to public input. Finally, there should be an effective mechanism for legislative approval of the commission's plans. We believe that Governor Cuomo's bill, S.3419/A.5388 accomplishes all these things and strongly support its passage as soon as possible to draw the lines for the next decade.

At our community forums all around the state, the public is outraged and surprised when they learn how the current process of redistricting is accomplished. Voters want to elect their representatives, not allow the representatives to manipulate the process and unfairly advantage the incumbents or party leadership. The League believes it imperative that an independent redistricting process be adopted so that people, not parties, are protected.

NATIONAL LEAGUE NEWS

League Opposes Elimination of Election Assistance Commission: League President Elisabeth MacNamara sent a [letter to the Committee on House Administration](#) urging members to oppose HR 672, which would terminate the Election Assistance Commission and transfer some of its functions to the Federal Election Commission.

The League believes that elections are fundamental to a functioning democracy and that every effort should be made to elevate their administration to the highest importance. With many continuing threats to the right to vote, now is not the time to terminate the only federal agency that devotes its full resources and attention to improving our elections. Congress should not turn its back on federal efforts to ensure election integrity, improve voter access to the polls, and improve election systems. The value of the EAC far outweighs its monetary costs; in fact, the costs of poorly run elections are intolerable. It is time for election administration to move into the 21st Century, not back toward the 19th.

In a surprise move, the House leadership scheduled a vote on HR 672 for Wednesday, June 22. The League sent out Action Alerts urging members to contact their representatives to tell them to vote 'no.'

HR 672 was voted down.

Voter Protection Update: Across the nation, our state Leagues have done an outstanding job in fighting for voter protection! Despite these efforts and in an unprecedented assault on democracy, six state legislatures passed voter suppression legislation in recent weeks – legislation that could disenfranchise thousands of eligible voters nationwide. The six states are FL, SC, MO, KS, TX, and WI. New requirements in some of the new laws include: requiring photo ID to vote (some of the most restrictive ever passed); burdensome and unreasonable restrictions on voter registration drives (the LWVFL was forced to stop its voter registration campaigns); shortening early voting periods; and increasing residency requirements so that it's virtually impossible for college students to vote.

One fundamental League argument against photo ID is that it erects barriers to voting which disproportionately affect minority populations. [Read this new study:](#) "Does Access to Required Forms of Identification Vary across the Population?" Also, learn more about the [League's Public Advocacy for Voter Protection \(PAVP\) project](#).

Be assured that the battles are not over; state Leagues are responding and examining options available to stop the legislation from going into effect. [The Florida League is one example.](#) For ongoing discussions and news from state Leagues, visit our [Facebook page](#).

NATIONAL LEAGUE NEWS (continued)

Redistricting: Our redistricting work continued in May, working closely with stakeholders in nine states — California, Florida, Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia — to make sure the process is transparent and has adequate public input. Several states' redistricting maps will be finalized in the coming weeks, and Leagues are working full time to ensure their views are heard. Texas is by far one of the most active redistricting states right now. The League of Women Voters of Texas recently wrapped up a month of statewide educational forums bringing together civil rights groups, community leaders and voters to discuss how new district lines should be drawn. [View video here!](#)

Clean Air Defense: The League's efforts to defend the Clean Air Act by calling attention to votes by Senator Scott Brown (R-MA) and Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO), blocking new air pollution standards, have made an impact on this vital public health issue and raised the importance of protecting clean air. The [accountability ads](#) aired for two weeks in early May, calling on both Senators to "protect the people, not the polluters." *There has been much debate about the appropriateness of singling out actual legislators when the League has worked tirelessly for decades to maintain its stellar reputation for being nonpartisan and focusing on issues, not individuals or candidates.*

According to the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must set air quality standards to protect public health. Based on the science, the EPA is expected to set a new smog standard this July. The **oil, coal and other polluting industries are pressuring the Obama administration** to delay the standard or to issue a weak standard so that they can continue to pollute our air in order to meet their bottom line.

[Send a message to President Obama. Tell him to stand up against pollution and keep our air clean.](#)

Our health and environment are under attack by big polluters. We can't let them stop EPA's efforts to clean up life-threatening pollution which will save thousands of lives and improve the quality of life for millions more.

A DAY LIKE NO OTHER

On May 18th I represented our League at the Naturalization court in White Plains. Each of Westchester's Leagues has two dates during the year when they represent the League in welcoming new citizens.

Need I say what a festive and emotional afternoon it was? So many families, little ones included, gathered to support and cheer on the new citizens! The League is one of several organizations that appear here to congratulate and disburse citizenship information, especially voters' information. This year we had a new edition of First Vote to hand out, along with little flag lapel pins. This publication has been recently revised, and is full of important information for voters, old and new alike! Anyone with a newly minted voter turning 18 this year should absolutely have a copy to give them!

The afternoon proceeds like this: The families gather in the Central Jury Room, which has a slightly raised stage, and the honored guests, (League and any other organizations) are seated down front in the first row. The Court Clerk introduces the Hon. Robert DiBella, Supreme Court Judge, and then introduces County Clerk Timothy Idoni, who administers the Oath of Allegiance and leads the Pledge of Allegiance. The Justice introduced the honored guests (that's us and two women from the DAR this day) and made a short speech honoring his immigrant grandparents and welcoming 120 new citizens from 48 different countries.....amazing!

He then introduced the guest speaker, Congresswoman Nita Lowey, who gave a really warm and wonderful speech of welcome. Then each new citizen comes down front to receive his or her certificate of naturalization and have their picture taken with Ms. Lowey and Judge DiBella. After the picture taking they pass along the front row to where I stood first in line to give each one a copy of First Vote and lapel flag, and then the two representatives of the DAR congratulated each one and gave them American flags. Almost through the proceedings, shaking hands and getting big smiles from almost everyone, a young woman shook my hand, passed on to the next person and suddenly turned back to me...."You are the League of Women Voters? Thank you, thank you for fighting for women's rights! What a wonderful organization! Did you know Susan B. Anthony?"

I had to laugh, but it was meant so sincerely! We really do have a good reputation, historic figures and all! Our next session will be in October, and I hope one or two of you will come with me then. It will make you appreciate your heritage, I guarantee it!

-- Del Bashkow

CONTACT INFORMATION

National League:

1730 M Street NW, Suite 1000,
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

Website: <http://watpa.org/lwv> email: LWVwestchester@verizon.net

Our Local League:

PO Box 584, Goldens Bridge, NY 10526

Rosemary MacLaughlin: rosem55@verizon.net

****BEDFORD-LEWISBORO-NORTH SALEM WEBSITE COMING SOON!!****

MEMBERSHIP

Please send dues that are up for renewal to our Membership Chair, Kay Tyler, ASAP. Also, if your phone number, email address, or postal address has changed, please notify Kay of that as well.

**208 Harris Rd HB4, Bedford Hills NY 10507
241-8515 or kaykolman@optimum.net**

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.