

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE

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

APRIL 2007

BULLETIN

ISSUE FIVE

The League of Women Voters of Bronxville

*invites you and your friends to its
Annual Meeting and Luncheon*

*An Irresistible Force Meets an Immovable Object:
The Physics of New York Politics*

*Guest Speaker: Jay Gallagher, Capitol Bureau Chief
Gannett News Service*

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Board Meeting: 10:00 AM (Members)

Luncheon: 12:00 Noon

*Lake Isle Country Club
660 White Plains Road
Eastchester*

(See inside for more information and reservations)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Fellow Leaguers and Friends:

I have come to the end of my term as president of the Bronxville League and offer herewith, as Janet Jaidi calls it, my swan song. First: an observation about one of the wonderful things about being a Leaguer. These last two years have afforded many chances to learn about and study (and to organize events for fellow leaguers to learn about and study) the pressing issues of the day through programs we presented on immigration, the UN, county recycling efforts, HAVA and state election problems, the Patriot Act, government inspection of foodstuffs, the pharmaceutical industry and we were addressed by, spoke with and questioned a number of elected and appointed officials. I am better informed. I know our members are too.

Our March coffee will stick in my memory (and, I suspect the memories of others in attendance) for a long time. Our speaker told a harrowing, indeed a frightening, story of miscarried justice, bad police work, and a prosecutorial system that was heedless and uncaring. And, being a thoughtful and intelligent young man, he urged us to advocate for changes in the system and against the death penalty. His story, in brief, is this.

Jeffrey Deskovic was 17 when a jury convicted him of murder in the 1989 death of a girl named Angela Correa. He had been arrested in Peekskill, where he lived, but, then, without access to a lawyer or his parents, was moved to Putnam County where he was questioned for more than seven hours. Confused and frightened, although he knew he was innocent, he made up a story and confessed. He had been told that if DNA evidence found on Angela Correa's body did not match his DNA he would not be charged with the crime. There was no DNA match but he was charged nevertheless. And he was tried and convicted. For years after his conviction, his attempts to get DNA retesting were rebuffed. At last, his case having been taken on by the Innocence Project, there was further DNA testing and in Sept. 2006, the results proved not only that Jeffrey Deskovic was innocent but also established the identity of the killer - who, upon being so identified, confessed. Further along in this issue of the Bulletin, you will find a piece on Tuesday's coffee by Membership Chair Adelaide DiGiorgi, who has included in it important information about contacts. I urge you to read it

There were a number of reporters at our coffee: one from the New York Times (the Times plans to do an extended story on such miscarriages of justice), another from the Journal News and one, with camera man in tow from TV 12 in White Plains. It was this last mentioned reporter who asked me, pointedly, whether I thought an event such as our coffee would make any difference at all in whether New York would reinstitute the death penalty -- whether the views of any single citizen made a difference. I responded emphatically. I pointed out that the League studies issues and, on the basis of study, reaches consensus. It is only on the basis of informed consensus that we advocate. We studied the issue of the death penalty and reached a consensus against it and, yes, I believe that our coffee and the sending of letters by our members to state legislators would make a difference. And may it always be thus.

I hope to see you all at our annual League luncheon April 26th. In the meantime, please put pen to paper and write your state legislator. But for the fact that he was younger than 18 when he was alleged to have committed murder, Jeffrey Deskovic would, most likely, have been sentenced to death. A sobering thought, isn't it?

Sandy Slade

HEALTH ISSUES – APRIL, 2007

Did You Know

In an executive order published in the Federal Register in late January '07, President Bush decreed that all government agencies have a regulatory policy office run by a political appointee to supervise the development of rules and documents providing guidance to regulated industries. Translation (as given by Robert Pear, *NY Times*, Jan 29'07): The White House will have a gatekeeper in each agency to ensure that the president's priorities are carried out. According to Pear, business executives and consumer advocates said the administration was particularly concerned about the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and OSHA (Office for Safety and Health Administration).

Under this new directive, federal agencies must justify any new regulations that they issue by identifying “the specific market failure” (?) that makes them necessary. In addition, “any significant guidance document” must be reviewed by the White House before it is issued. This, says Rep. Henry Waxman, Chair of the Comm. on Oversight and Government Reform (*NY Times*, Jan 29,'07), allows the political staff at the White House to dictate decisions on health and safety issues, even if the government's own impartial experts disagree.

A constant, in our form of society, is the inherent tension between the public interest and a myriad of competing profit or ideology driven goals, for both private and political gain. Any, or all of them, can threaten the public well-being. The need to protect that well being became so obvious over the years that regulatory agencies were set up, one after another, for just that purpose. It is the primary reason for their existence. This recent executive order, however, might cripple their essential function.

In past Coffees, we discussed politicization at the FDA. In future bulletins Sandy Slade, Julia Pomeroy and Pat Harriss will write about it with respect to the Justice Department, the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the Dept. Of Agriculture.

Edith Szold, Health Issues Chair

*****UPCOMING EVENTS*****

BRONXVILLE LWV MONTHLY COFFEE

Bronxville Women's Club

***Tuesday, April 17, 2007
9:30 AM***

Speaker: Sandy Slade

Sandy will speak to us about “Ethics in Government”

BRONXVILLE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
Report of the Nominating Committee
April, 2007

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President	Adelaide DiGiorgi	2007-2009
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Mary Ellen Capshaw	2007-2009
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NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2008

Dorothy Brennan, Chair
Jean Delfiner
Florence Vitiello

Respectfully submitted,

Nominating Committee
Dorothy Brennan, Chair
Courtney Eudaly Hanley
Martha Bennett Moore
Janet Jaidi
Pat Parker

MISSION STATEMENT

Promote open government that is responsible and responsive to its citizens. Provide forums and other gatherings for the community to interact with candidates, officials, and each other to increase participation in local government. Raise ideas and issues that may have local significance and provide opportunities for citizens to discuss them.

JEFFREY DESKOVIC ON WRONGFUL CONVICTION

During my many years as Membership Chair, scheduling the League's informational Programs (each third Tuesday of the month September through June), never have I heard anything as heart-wrenching as Jeffrey Deskovic's ordeal. Jeffrey Deskovic told us his compelling, first-hand story of how he was wrongly convicted of murder in our county. He spoke to us about his ordeal, how he is moving forward in his life, and how he is trying to prevent this kind of miscarriage of justice from happening to others in the future.

Having been through the system, Mr. Deskovic now knows all too well where the cracks in it lie. He plans to work toward achieving legislative changes that will reduce the possibility of a wrongful conviction. finding better public defense lawyers, and most importantly, ending the use of the death penalty.

In summary, his recommendations are:

- All interrogations must be videotaped.
- Tactics which are known to produce false confessions, and therefore wrongful convictions, must be outlawed. These include lengthy interrogations, threats, claiming to have evidence that doesn't exist, and use of the polygraph
- Interrogation of those who are mentally retarded or have other psychological problems without a lawyer present should be banned.
- End the practice of offering criminals deals to testify against others.
- There should be a pre-trial hearing in which false confession experts review all alleged confessions for truthfulness prior to a confession being allowed as evidence.

We have invested our government and legal systems and their functionaries with tremendous power. It is an outrage to see that power visited wrongfully on a fellow citizen and member of our community. It is in our own best interest to work to prevent this kind of injustice from happening again.

Earlier this year Jeffrey Deskovic began pursuing a bachelor's degree in Behavioral Science at Mercy College, and is enrolled in two online courses and two that meet at Mercy's Manhattan campus. Deskovic earned an associate's degree and a total of 90 college credits while wrongly imprisoned. He is now a member of Mercy's class of 2008. After that, he hopes to go on to law school

His contact is his friend and manager Darren Wilkins, who can be reached at (914) 356-1999. If you are aware of other organizations who would care to hear his story firsthand, please contact Darren Wilkins to arrange for Jeffrey's appearance. It is vital that Jeffrey get the word out for the legislative changes he so strongly advocates.

Our thanks to Jeffrey for speaking with us, and our best wishes to him for a brighter future.

Adelaide DiGiorgi

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Jay Gallagher

Capitol Bureau Chief, Gannett News Service

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Luncheon: 12:00 Noon

Lake Isle Country Club

660 White Plains Road

Eastchester

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please reserve _____ seats at \$30 per person

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
(includes special recognition)**

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

**Dee Sorensen
10 Vine Street
Bronxville, NY 10708**

JAY GALLAGHER, OUR LUNCHEON SPEAKER

Jay Gallagher is the Capitol Bureau Chief for the Gannett News Service, an Albany watcher and a longtime friend of the League of Women Voters. Two years ago he addressed the county LWV on this subject. He writes a weekly column in the Gannett papers and runs a bureau that covers New York State government and politics for the 8 Gannett papers in New York and five non-Gannett clients.

His book, *"The Politics of Decline: Chronicling New York's Descent and What You Can Do to Save Your State"*, was published in December 2005. He is a regular panelist on a statewide PBS show, "New York Week in Review" and "Reporter's Roundtable" on Capital News in Albany as well as radio talkshows statewide. He has also appeared on the "News Hour with Jim Lehrer" on PBS and "Inside Politics" on CNN.

Mr. Gallagher has won many awards through the years, including Outstanding Reporter at the New York Capitol in 1997 and 2004, awards from the New York Publishers' Association, Capitol Reports, New York Common Cause and numerous citations from the New York State Associated Press Managing Editors Association. He has a BA in government from Colby College in Waterville, Maine and has lectured at many universities around the country.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE!!!

(Fiscal year begins April 1st)

Individual	\$50	\$ _____
Household	\$75	\$ _____
Contribution		\$ _____

Make checks payable to Bronxville LWV and send with this to:

**Bronxville LWV
P. O. Box 321
Bronxville, NY 10708**

Name(s) _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

(Please note that dues and contributions are not tax deductible)

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BULLETIN

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People with Disabilities)**

**League of Women Voters of Bronxville
P.O. Box 321, Bronxville, NY 10708
President: Sondra K. Slade
Editor: Janet Jaidi**

IMPORTANT DATES

Apr 10	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Board Meeting	Bvl Women's Club Midland/Tanglewyld
Apr 17	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Coffee Meeting	Bvl Women's Club
Apr 23	7:30 PM	Health Care Forum	See Inside
Apr 26	10:00 AM 12:00 Noon	Bronxville LWV Annual Meeting Bronxville LWV Annual Luncheon	Lake Isle Country Club 660 White Plains Road Eastchester