

# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE

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

JUNE 2008

BULLETIN

ISSUE EIGHT

Memorial Day, May 26, 2008



(Martha Bennett Moore, Alice Clapp, Sue Weisfeld, Pat Parker and Adelaide DiGiorgi)

**It Was a Great Parade to Mark the End of a Great League Year!**

**SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER!**

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A number of us attended the County League's Annual Convention on May 8<sup>th</sup>, where Jeanne Zaino, Phd , Chair & Assistant Professor of Political Science & International Studies, Iona College, spoke on "The Great Divide? Running & Ruling the American System". She had an interesting view on America's two-party system, and we hope to have her kick off our Fall third Tuesday informational Coffee series.

May's third Tuesday Coffee featured Karen Burstein, an attorney and former candidate for Attorney General, currently teaching at Pace University on the subject of New York State politics. She was a vibrant exciting speaker – and we'll want her back again!

Bronxville's Annual Memorial Day parade took place on Monday, May 26<sup>th</sup>. It was a fine parade, and League member Vicky Ford and her husband Cy were the Grand Marshals. League member Mayor Marvin gave an inspiring speech dedicated to all those who have served in our country's Armed Forces.

Our final Spring Board meeting will take place at Janet Jaidi's, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday coffee for June will be a brainstorming session at The Bronxville Womens' Club on June 17<sup>th</sup>. I'll be attending the LWVUS convention in Oregon at that time, but hope to update you as to what's transpired there in our next Bulletin in the fall. In the meantime, I'm hoping all members and friends will bring their ideas for the League's future programs and activities to the coffee meeting. We need your input to keep our League vibrant.

**News from the County League:** During the week of September 16th, the LWVWestchester will be conducting a membership drive consisting of an LWV week and a cornerstone event.

**LWV WEEK:** The idea is to organize an LWV week, probably during the week of Sept.16<sup>th</sup>. A campaign with a consistent theme that would include a public service announcement, something on YouTube (the same footage can be used for both) and articles or ads in local newspapers is planned.

**CORNERSTONE/CROWNING EVENT:** One night during LWV week, a large event will be held. Local league members are to be asked to attend, and bring at least one new person. David Schwartz of the Museum of the Moving Image has agreed to do a program concerning media literacy and the 2008 Presidential Campaign ("**The You Tube Election**") We are hoping to do this at the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville or at another venue with a large movie screen. More information will be forthcoming over the summer.

So, let's all plan to enjoy the summer and come back to League revitalized. See you in September!

Regards,  
Adelaide

### **Bronxville LWV September Coffee Meeting**

**Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>  
9:30 AM**

**Bronxville Women's Club  
135 Midland Avenue**

**Our speaker will be Jeanne Zaino, PhD, Chair and Assistant Professor of Political Science at Iona College. She will give us some thought-provoking insights into the upcoming election.**

## HEALTH ISSUES

Many of our most important decisions, collectively or individually, involve trade-offs and compromises: national security vs. civil rights; the risk vs. benefit of potent drugs; data bases vs. personal privacy; and now, the possibility of personalized medicine vs. control of the private information needed to design it.

I refer to the new genetic research. If your risk of developing a given disease lies in your genes, learning about it through genetic testing would help you make better health care choices. And should you choose to be a research subject, you would help others learn more about prevention as well as treatment.

*But* - there's a catch. If you did get tested, and your insurance company got a whiff of it, they might look for a reason to deny you coverage. Insurance rates, even insurance itself, is predicated on the risk of the unknown. If the risk is known - or thought to be known - what happens to the formula?... to the company? That's one concern.

Here's another. Suppose you have genes for colon cancer or diabetes and a prospective employer finds out. You may no longer be seen as that grand bearer of charm, skills and competence but as a possible drag on the department with "*sick days*" and

"*diminished productivity*" pulsating in day-glo colors through your jacket. Hire you? Better not.....

This is one set of concerns that Congress seems to have recognized and responded to with uncharacteristic alacrity. Democrats and Republicans alike agreed that people should not be penalized because they were born at higher risk for a disease. They passed a bill that would prohibit health insurers and employers from discriminating against anyone based on the information carried in their genes: on May 1<sup>st</sup> in the House by a 414-0 vote, and in the Senate, a week earlier, by 95-0. President Bush has indicated he will sign it. The legislation is known as the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, and carries fines as high as \$300,000 for each violation. The health insurance measure will go into effect a year after it becomes law, and the employment measure after 18 months. It obviously will be hard to enforce, and does not address similar concerns about long-term care or life insurers.

It also cannot influence what parents decide about a foetus. Once there was the ideal Aryan child. May there never be the ideal American.

**Edith Szold, Health Issues Chair**

### **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE!!!**

**(Fiscal year begins April 1st)**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>\$75</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
<b>Contribution</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>

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

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

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE**

**1 APRIL 2008**

**LIST OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

<b>PRESIDENT:</b>	<b>Adelaide DiGiorgi</b>	<b>2007-2009</b>
<b>FIRST VICE PRES:</b>	<b>Irma Moore</b>	<b>2007-2009</b>
<b>SECOND VICE PRES:</b>	<b>Edith Szold</b>	<b>2008-2010</b>
<b>THIRD VICE PRES:</b>	<b>Pat Harriss</b>	<b>2008-2010</b>
<b>TREASURER:</b>	<b>Mary Nicolis</b>	<b>2008-2010</b>
<b>RECORDING SECRETARY:</b>	<b>Julia Pomeroy</b>	<b>2007-2009</b>

**DIRECTORS**

<b>Mary Ellen Capshaw</b>	<b>2007-2009</b>
<b>Alice Clapp</b>	<b>2008-2010</b>
<b>Janet Jaidi</b>	<b>2007-2009</b>
<b>Martha B. Moore</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>
<b>Pat Parker</b>	<b>2008-2010</b>
<b>Birgitta Sherman</b>	<b>2008-2010</b>

**OFF BOARD**

**Denise Berthier**  
**Dorothy Brennan**  
**Martha Chatterjee**  
**Courtney Eudaly**  
**Amanda Moore**  
**Sue Weisfeld**

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2009**

**Florence Vitiello, Chair**  
**Martha Chatterjee**  
**Sue Weisfeld**

## **Reform Day in Albany, April 29, 2008 - Birgitta Sherman, Bronxville LWV**

Reform Day is an annual event not to be missed. It is organized by Common Cause/NY with support from and participation of many civic organizations, the League of Women Voters prominently among them.

As I had never seen more of Albany than some shopping malls I was eager to observe where the legislators work in the Historic District. I joined a busload of mainly League members for Reform Day. The purpose was to ask our legislators to take action on ethics reforms, campaign finance reform, redistricting reform and rules reform. We gathered in "The Sign of the Tree", a restaurant in the Empire State Plaza. The day was fast-paced, and I did not have time to see much of the buildings and the monumental works of art. Everything was on a large scale with much marble being used.

Susan Lerner of Common Cause NY welcomed the participants and explained how the day would progress. We had already got background material with a list of problems and suggested actions we would bring up with the legislators. We had also received lots of potential answers and suggested counterarguments as well as a page of "do and don't". Blair Horner of NY Public Interest Research Group, who has spoken about "Project Sunlight" at one of our coffee mornings, addressed Ethics reforms in his enthusiastic way. The state need an independent ethics commission, real restrictions on the "personal use" of campaign contributions, a ban on "pay to play" contributions from lobbyists and those receiving government contracts, and more disclosure of lawmakers' financial dealings including whether they have business relationships with lobbyists.

Jess Wisneski of Citizen Action and Susan Lerner covered Campaign reform. New York needs a campaign finance law that includes lower campaign contribution limits, improved disclosure, tougher enforcement and a voluntary system on public financing of elections. Dick Dadey of Citizens Union dealt with Redistricting reform. The legislative districts should be established by those with no vested interest in the outcome; an independent redistricting commission using objective criteria. Allowing legislators to draw their own district lines is a clear conflict of interest. Beth Foster and Andrew Stengel of Brennan Center talked about Rules reform. The legislature should empower rank and file members, give the representatives the power to bring bills to a vote and distribute resources fairly.

Several lawmakers, but alas not our new Governor, came to listen to the speeches by the Senate Minority Leader Malcolm Smith, the State Comptroller Thomas Di Napoli and the Attorney General Andrew Cuomo on the reform issues. They all stressed the importance of reforms and highlighted their own efforts to reform the state government. And now the pace picked up. We had been seated in teams. My team was "W" and consisted of Judie and Marcia from LWV Suffolk branch, Rosemary MacLaughlin from Bedford, whom you might have met at our Annual Meeting Luncheon, and myself. We had not seen Lisa Ritchie, our captain yet. We grabbed our lunch boxes and had hardly taken the first bite before Lisa stormed in and told us to get moving. What a fire storm she was! She is quite the activist with excellent command of the issues, well versed in lobbying techniques, without fear of authority or old age and only 22 years old.

We were allotted four lawmakers: Senator Jeffrey Klein who is our State senator, Assemblyman Felix Ortiz from Brooklyn, Assemblyman Adam Bradley from Rosemary's district and Assemblyman James Conti from Nassau, the only Republican. We had a list of their committees and sponsorship if relevant bills as well as a list of questions which were as follows: Legislator's position on redistricting: Do they support an independent commission? Public hearings and public access to maps and reports? Well-defined guidelines in statute? Legislator's position on Ethics Reform: Do they support an independent commission? Disclosure of public officials' financial backgrounds? Disclose lobbyists' business relationships w/lobbyists? Ethics training requirement? Legislator's position on Rules Reform. Legislator's position on Campaign Finance Regulatory Reform: Do they support lower contribution limits? Tightening restrictions on personal use of campaign funds? Better reporting – occupation and employer? Restricting fundraisers in Albany during session? Legislator's position on public funding of elections?

Off and running. First to Senator Klein who received us graciously. We had a most enjoyable time and found that Sen. Klein agreed with most of our points of view. We were enthusiastic, but Lisa thought he should have promised more direct actions. Felix Ortiz was not in, but an aide, Dan Oosthuizen listened to us and answered our questions to the best of his ability and promised to follow up. Mr. Bradley has sponsored a bill creating an independent redistricting commission as well as one on public financing of election campaigns, so we sang from the same hymn sheet to a great extent. Mr Conte has been a minority member for 25 years and seen it all. He was rather pessimistic about the outcome of our proposals. Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

It was quite exhausting really. The day was to close with a rally out of doors to tell Albany "Enough is enough! Change the way business is conducted in Albany, and only real campaign reform is acceptable". As the weather was iffy there was an alternative venue: The Egg, an egg-shaped auditorium. Team W pronounced the weather inclement and marched off to the Egg where a the homosexual, bi-sexual and transgender lobby already had a rally. We ended up in limbo in the corridors of power under the Plaza and retired to our bus which brought us back to Westchester.

Next year I will not miss the rally and will wear running shoes. I hope you will join me. It is an informative and exciting day.

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

# 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  
President: Adelaide DiGiorgi  
Editor: Janet Jaidi

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

## IMPORTANT DATES

### June

17	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Monthly Coffee Meeting	Bvl Women's Club 135 Midland Ave
----	---------	---------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

### Sept

9	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Open Board Meeting	Bvl Women's Club
16	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Monthly Coffee Meeting	Bvl Women's Club