

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BRONXVILLE

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

MARCH 2008

BULLETIN

ISSUE FIVE

Tuckahoe Village Trustee Candidates' Forum

Sunday, March 9, 2008

2 PM

Tuckahoe Village Hall

(See inside for details)

Bronxville LWV Monthly Coffee Meeting

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

9:30 AM

Bronxville Women's Club

135 Midland Avenue

Speaker:

Dolores Scott Braithwaite, Esq

Executive Director,

Westchester County Human Rights Commission

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

February - 29 days long this Leap year - has been an active one for League members and friends. On February 13th, a dreary, flooded Wednesday morn, our annual Breakfast with the County Executive took place at the White Plains Library. A number of our Bronxville League members were in attendance, surviving the rain and enjoying many home made breakfast goodies. County Exec. Spano had a good-sized audience to speak to, especially considering the dreadful weather.

Our Third Tuesday informational coffee featured Blair Horner, now of the Office of the NYS Attorney general, presenting a look at the Project Sunlight website he was hired to run. **“Project Sunlight”**, a powerful and easy-to-use website gives the public unprecedented access to the workings of state government and the information it keeps. It allows tracking, in as real time as the reports are available, seven different state databases -- campaign financing, lobbying, agency contracts, member items, legislation and both for-profit and not-for-profit corporations -- and the links between them.

March's coffee on the 18th will feature Delores Braithwaite, Executive Director of Westchester County's Human Rights Commission.

Thanks to Westchester Election Commissioners for protecting our vote! Westchester County Election Commissioners chose the optical scan voting system to replace lever machines in compliance with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Westchester voters will now have a voting system that can be verified by paper ballots marked by the voter. This is the only safe way the authenticity of all elections can be upheld. The Board of Elections has chosen the Sequoia optical scan device for paper ballots, with an election-district based counting process, for the HAVA machines to take effect in the 2009 election (the first election with the new machines). Until then, Westchester will use our current lever machines, supplemented with ballot-marking devices for disabled voters only.

A League website gave Westchester residents access to Presidential Primary Details: Just in time for the February 5th New York State Presidential Primary, registered Westchester voters were able to access updated election information at www.SmartVoter.org. While the League of Women Voters of Westchester will continue to publish and distribute its traditional Voters Guide, both in English and Spanish, in time for general elections, Smart Voter now provides county voters with a continuously updated source of election information. Don't have a personal computer? Most local libraries provide access to Smart Voter on their public computers. All March local Village elections will be accessible as well. The Bronxville League will be hosting a Candidates meeting in the Village of Tuckahoe on Sunday, March 9th. Three individuals will be running for two Village Trustee seats, and you can see their input on SmartVoter.org.

Also in March, The League of Women Voters of Westchester (LWVW) will host an informational presentation on the future of the Tappan Zee Bridge and Route 287 corridor (See page 5 for details). The LWVW encourages public officials and residents to attend, as this is an excellent opportunity to learn about the broader implications of the Tappan Zee project on the lower Hudson Valley.

So, keep advocating for good government, and remember the League's Mission Statement: **“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.”**

Regards,
Adelaide



Moderated by
The League of Women Voters

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2008

2 PM

Tuckahoe Village Hall
65 Main Street

CANDIDATES FOR VILLAGE TRUSTEE
(2 posts open)

Margaret Fountain Coleman (C-Ind-Tuckahoe First)

Steven Ecklund (R-C-Ind-Tuckahoe First) *Incumbent

Ernest Zocchi (D-Non-partisan) *Incumbent

HEALTH ISSUES

It's extremely gratifying to see health insurance finally get the serious attention it deserves in this election campaign. Forty-seven million uninsured is no small matter; even worse are the insured who think they're covered until denials come when their need is greatest. However, that comes under "medical care". "Health care" is what helps us stay well in the first place: preserving clean air, clean water, fresh and uncontaminated food; ensuring safe and effective drugs; maintaining a toxic free environment. That's what we, in this country, have striven for through regulatory agencies and education, and what those of us who care really expected to achieve.

For many reasons, we haven't made it. In fact, in many areas we're falling ever farther behind. Especially now, when so many issues compete for our attention, it's important to keep a steady eye on this one - for example, on the FDA. A series of reports by the Government Accountability Office concluded that the agency is so overwhelmed by the flood of imports that it is "*incapable of protecting the public*" from unsafe drugs, medical devices and food. (NY Times, 1/29/08). Pater Barton Hutt, the agency's former chief counsel, recently told a Congressional panel that the agency was "barely hanging on by its fingertips". (Editorial, NY Times, 2/3/08) Congress has repeatedly burdened the FDA with new responsibilities over the past two decades, unaccompanied by money or personnel enough to carry them out.

In 1987, the CDC and the FDA had nearly identical budgets. In 2007 the CDC, which is not a regulatory agency, got four times as much as the FDA, which is. In the last 14 years the drug agency lost 1,311 employees and nearly \$300 million in appropriations to inflation while 100 new laws were passed expanding its responsibilities. The tasks have also become increasingly complicated because of the burgeoning of modern medical products and the huge increase in food and drug ingredients coming from abroad. This is especially worrisome given China's record. (You may have noted that the Olympics committee, testing a chicken breast sold in Beijing, found it so loaded with steroids that they decided to "order in" from us instead.)

The agency now regulates about \$1 trillion worth of goods or 25% of every dollar spent by consumers. At its current pace, the agency would take 13 years to inspect every foreign drug plant exporting to us, 27 years to check every foreign medical device plant, and 1,900 to get 'round to all the foreign food plants. Besides that, the agency lacks scientists who understand the new technologies relevant to product safety, and is "hobbled by a high turnover rate of scientists, a decrepit information technology system, (and) a weak organizational structure". There is near unanimity about the problem but unhappily, no apparent unanimity - yet - about what to do. Please, write to your Senators and Representative. Your basic health, and mine, is on the line!

Edith Szold, Health Issues Chair

BRONXVILLE LWV MONTHLY COFFEE MEETING

At our coffee on Tuesday, March 18th, Dolores Scott Braithwaite, Esq. Executive Director of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission, will speak to us about the workings of the Commission to promote dignity and respect by advancing justice, equality and education for the diverse community of Westchester. It strives to eliminate discrimination locally and globally through legal, education and legislative advocacy; investigate, uncover and prosecute standard as well as systemic violations of the Human Rights Law and related laws; enable and support legislation designed to protect individuals from unfair and/or unequal treatment and seek the repeal of those laws that create barriers to fair and equal treatment; provide education and advocacy that fosters racial and ethnic harmony among diverse individuals and groups; and promote and support the furtherance of Human Rights in employment, housing, public accommodation, schools, credit and any other area.

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The Tappan Zee Bridge: A Regional Approach Hosted by LWVW

The League of Women Voters® of Westchester (LWVW) will host an informational presentation on the future of the Tappan Zee Bridge and Route 287 corridor, entitled "The Tappan Zee Bridge: A Regional Approach," on **Thursday, March 27, 2008, from 7:30-9:30 p.m.**, in the **Gathering Room at Kendal-on-Hudson, Routes 9 and 117 in Sleepy Hollow**. Panelists will include Cheryl Lewy, Chair, Westchester County Planning Board, Michael Anderson, Team Leader, New York State Department of Transportation, and Marsha Gordon, Westchester County Co-Chair, Tappan Zee Futures Task Force.

The panelists will discuss current and projected regional conditions necessitating this project (e.g., demographics, employment trends and transit needs), proposals for the future of the bridge and I-287 corridor, and the Task Force's perspective thus far. A question-and-answer period will follow the presentation.

The LWVW encourages public officials and residents to attend, as this is an excellent opportunity to learn about the broader implications of the Tappan Zee project on the lower Hudson Valley. For directions and additional information, please call (914) 332-1301 or e-mail sdschwarz@aol.com

(For those who missed Blair Horner at our February Coffee, here's another opportunity)

LARCHMONT/MAMARONECK LWV

Monthly Breakfast, Friday, March 7, 2008 8:45 am - 10:15 am

Cafe Mozart, 123 Mamaroneck Ave., next to Sal's Pizza

Our special guest will be **Blair Horner**, former director of **NYPIRG** (NY Public Interest Research Group) and the newly appointed head of Governor Spitzer's "**Project Sunlight**."

Blair is making a special trip to Mamaroneck to tell League members and our guests about this exciting new project.. "Project Sunlight" will greatly increase League's advocacy efforts concerning campaign finance reform, lobbying contributions and ethics. This will, for the first time, open state government and shine light on the sometimes-murky underbelly of Albany. According to information from the Attorney General's office, "Project Sunlight" will also allow users (both those with extensive experience in government and those with little) the opportunity to easily examine state records – agency contracts, campaign finance, charities, corporate registrations, legislation, lobbying, and member items.

PS -- As always, put a note in your windshield and you need not feed the meters until 11 AM

No RSVP -- Cost is \$7 payable at the table. LWV members and non-members are welcome. You'll want to arrive early for this one to secure a seat!

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

BULLETIN

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IMPORTANT DATES

Mar

9	2 PM	Tuckahoe Candidates' Forum	Tuckahoe Village Hall
11	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Board Meeting	Bvl Women's Club
18	9:30 AM	Bronxville LWV Monthly Coffee	Bvl Women's Club
27	7:30 PM	Tappan Zee Bridge Meeting	Kendal-on-Hudson