



# HEADLINES

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WHITE PLAINS

PRESIDENT, MADELINE ZEVON

[www.lwwwp.org](http://www.lwwwp.org)

APRIL 2011

EDITOR: RITA MALMUD

DESIGN: ROBERTA LAZARUS



## MAY 1 BUDGET BRUNCH

12:30 at 58 Midchester Ave.

*Commissioner of Finance Mike Genito will explain the proposed City budget and answer any questions of those present.*



## MAY 5 SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES MEETING

7:30 pm at WP High School - Room B1

*School Superintendent Christopher Clouet will first speak on the proposed School Budget and answer any questions. Following will be a debate IF there is a CONTESTED election (More candidates than positions to be filled). IF there is an UNCONTESTED election (Same number of candidates as positions to be filled), each candidate will make a short statement and that will conclude the evening.*

## 2010-11 LWVWP BOARD

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our Speakers Bureau has started! Roseanne Klein and Doris Dingott will address the White Plains Council of Neighborhood Associations on May 10th. We hope to increase our membership by reaching out to areas of White Plains that are poorly represented in the League and since WPCNA represents all areas of White Plains, we thought it was a good place to start. We would appreciate any other suggestions as to where we should speak.

Elsewhere in *Headlines* is a letter to the editor published in the *Journal News* about redistricting, which is an urgent and timely issue. I am happy to report, that a group of newly energized Leaguers have come forth to tackle this issue. They said that rather than merely discussing problems, they wanted to be more active advocating for change. The good news is that they can work together with a network of other Leagues to increase their effectiveness.

Beth Kava gave a fabulous presentation on March 23rd about The Federal Role in Public Education which is the study project of the LWVUS for the next two years. Unfortunately, the weather was awful and the candidate's debate for White Plains Mayor was on the same night, but we had a good turnout, and it was obvious that those who attended cared passionately about this issue. The discussion that followed was very lively.

We are thrilled with our outstanding student, Claudia Benitez, who will be attending the program, Students in Albany, representing the White Plains League. She was so enthusiastic when she sat in on our Board meeting, volunteering to help set us up on Facebook and offering to bring up any issue we'd like while she's in Albany. We need more young blood in the League.

There are two League Conventions coming up. The Annual Convention of the LWV of Westchester on Thursday, June 2nd at the Scarsdale Women's Club and the Biennial Convention of the LWV of New York State in Albany from May 20 to 22nd. Conventions are a time to meet dynamic leaders and to learn the basics of League operation. Attending a Convention is very invigorating, it gives you a sense that you are actively contributing to democracy in a meaningful way. Please email me if you would like to join me at either or both of these Conventions. ☐

Happy Spring!!!



Madeline Zevon, President

# FEDERAL HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION

By 2019, the U.S. Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will improve health-care access by extending health insurance to 32 million more people than are now covered — 16 million through Medicaid starting in 2014, and the rest through subsidies to help lower-income people to afford health insurance.

Although the current legislation extends coverage and institutes reforms of the insurance industry, the League of Women Voters looks at it as only a first step to health-care reform. At its national convention last June, the league reaffirmed its resolution to advocate for single-payer Medicare for all.

Under the PPACA bill, 23 million Americans will still be uninsured in 2019. Surging health-care costs will not be contained. As long as we have private insurers we will never be able to achieve truly universal or affordable care. Compared with other developed nations, the United States pays twice as much for health care and yet ranks 49th in life expectancy. By replacing the inefficient patchwork of private insurers with a streamlined single-payer, our nation can save about \$400 billion annually, enough to cover everyone, with no co-pays or deductibles. The House single-payer bill, HR 676, will be introduced again this month. In the 2009-10 Congress, there were 12 co-sponsors from New York, and our Representative Nita Lowey recently said that when the same bill is reintroduced, she will sign on.

Businesses cannot compete in a global market because, in this country alone, they are saddled with the burden of providing health insurance to their employees. Private for-profit health insurance does not fit the market model.

The good news is that we may not have to wait for national single payer health-care reform. Some states are moving forward on their own. In Vermont, it looks likely to happen soon. Gov. Peter Shumlin is a strong single-payer supporter and Vermont may be the first state to pass it. Vermont has just completed a study showing that nearly a quarter of the current expenditures could be saved through adoption of a single-payer plan. Both houses in California have twice passed single-payer, but it was vetoed by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. The new governor, Jerry Brown, has supported single-payer in the past. In Hawaii, new Gov. Neil Abercrombie is a supporter of single-payer. In New York, Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, D-Manhattan, is again circulating his bill for single-payer. In Canada, Medicare for all was enacted province by province. Maybe that's what will happen in our country. It is something to hope for and work for. □

Madeline Zevon, President

# REDISTRICTING

as printed in  
the *Journal News*  
March 21, 2011



The White Plains League of Women Voters joins other Leagues in New York State in urging citizens to "take back the vote." To achieve that end, we have joined ReShape NY, a broad coalition of advocacy, business, union and civic groups calling on the governor and state Legislature to create an independent redistricting commission that draws district lines using fair and defined criteria while engaging the public in the process. If New Yorkers are to have legislators responsive to the interests of constituents rather than keeping itself in office, citizens must demand this change.

In New York, as in many other states, legislators have drawn district lines to maintain their own partisan majorities and protect incumbents. As a result, New York's elections are notoriously uncompetitive. Without strong competition in our electoral system, meaningful discussion of public policy has taken a back seat to partisan rhetoric and unrealistic budgets. In the 2010 election, New York had one of the lowest rates of voter participation in the nation. This is no surprise. Why should people vote if they face no real choice in candidates?

Despite opposition from ReShape NY and others — including a bipartisan group of legislators seeking to have a truly independent redistricting commission in place in time for drawing the lines in 2012 — the state Senate recently passed legislation that proposes a flawed constitutional amendment creating a redistricting commission that would not be effective until 2022. Voters cannot wait another 10 years for reform. We deserve better.

Contact your state legislators and insist that they support a truly independent redistricting commission to take effect immediately. □



Submitted by  
Barbara Cooper, Voter Service Co-chair  
and Madeline Zevon, President

# REPORT ON FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION PROGRAM

A group of League members enjoyed the hospitality of Ruth Stern on March 23 for a lively discussion of the League's current study issue – The Federal Role in Public Education led by League member and Pace professor Beth Kava. At the LWV national convention, members approved a study of the issue, focusing on four areas:

- ▶ the basic goals for public education
- ▶ the relationship between national, state, and local levels
- ▶ funding, and
- ▶ the movement toward common standards.

LWV chapters throughout the United States will study and evaluate this issue with the purpose of creating a League position that will inform future action.

Our group began by thinking about what each member saw as the primary goal of public education today. Among those mentioned were global competitiveness, civic responsibility, creation of a common culture, development of individual talents and preparation for the world of work. We realized how difficult it is to reach consensus even on the goals of public education, which makes the other key questions more challenging, such as

- ▶ who is to receive the educational services provided by the public? (a question about access and equity),
- ▶ how does government insure the quality of these services? ( a question about excellence), and
- ▶ who determines now what is taught to public school students? Who should?

The group looked at an overview of the federal involvement in education since the mid 1950's, noting that two rationales for this involvement were central to its justification – that of national defense and that of providing equity. The federal government has used funding of educational programs to widen access to a public education greatly since the 1960's.

Finally the group touched upon the recent initiatives of the Bush (No Child Left Behind) and Obama (Race to the Top) administrations and the work of State governors to develop Common Core standards. The timeline of the national League's study states that in the spring of 2011 information will be provided to local and state leagues; then in the fall of 2011 "leagues are encouraged to participate in the study of the Role of Federal Government in Public Education by scheduling meetings to educate members and communities about the issue and come to consensus."

We can look forward to continuing discussions about this critical national issue. □

Submitted by Beth Kava



## MEMBERSHIP

We're galvanizing our efforts to educate and inform our White Plains community. It takes the power of many to accomplish this goal. WE NEED YOUR HELP!!! Whether you are a member of the LWV or wish to join, please let us know your area of interests. Fill in the boxes below and return to membership chair:

Doris Dingott DLdingott@gmail.com 4 Macy Avenue, White Plains, NY 10605 289-0869

I'm interested in the following areas:

### Local Issues

- City Budget
- Voter Service
- School Budget
- Housing

### State and/or National

- Election Reform
- Health Care
- Budget Process

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_

(Thanks! Communicating on-line is so much easier and less expensive)

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan, non-profit organization but because it lobbies on issues, your membership dues are not tax deductible; dues checks should be payable to the **LWV White Plains**.

2011 Dues:  \$55.00 – Individual  \$80.00 – Household (2 members)



## WHITE PLAINS CITY BUDGET

Budget season is now in high gear. On May 2nd, the White Plains Common Council will hold a Public Hearing on the Proposed 2011 - 2012 Tax Budget. The Proposed Budget was submitted to the Common Council on April 4. The Common Council is now holding a number of Work Sessions to review and discuss its various revenue and expenditure items. An important joint meeting between the Common Council and the Budget and Management Advisory Committee, chaired by Councilwoman Beth Smayda, scheduled for April 11 at 6:30pm, presents an Overview of the Proposed Budget, as well as focuses on Revenue Review. Three additional meetings of the Common Council are scheduled prior to the May 2nd Public Hearing: April 14 for Public Works, April 20 for Public Safety, Parking and Traffic, April 25 for Library, Recreation and Youth, all at 6pm.

Due to the extensive work required of the Finance Department to prepare the budget numbers and supporting material in advance of the April submission, no scheduled meeting of the Budget and Management Advisory Committee was held in March. A meeting of that Committee is expected to take place on April 26, to prepare a statement on the Proposed Budget for the Public Hearing. The White Plains League of Women Voters will review and discuss the Proposed Budget with Commissioner of Finance Michael Genito at its annual Budget Brunch on Sunday, May 1 at 12:30 at 58 Midchester Ave.

The Budget and Management Advisory Committee did hold a meeting in mid-February. At that meeting, Commissioner Genito discussed the interim financial report for the six months ended December 30, 2010. As discussed in previous columns, the rise in sales tax revenues remained a cause for "cautious optimism," while the Committee was once again reminded that the City Budget will be negatively impacted by a fall in State aid as well as reduced interest earnings on the conservative investments we are permitted by law to purchase. Readers of the report have been pleased to note that, in addition to other presentation improvements, the financial data is now enhanced by the addition of a glossary.

The Committee continues to consider proposals to save money and promote management efficiency. In emergencies, such as snowstorms, informal arrangements between City departments often meet enhanced staffing needs; the Committee recommended that a plan for regular formal coordination be developed, with specific focus on maintenance functions performed by the Traffic and Parking Departments. Additionally, several members of the Committee have studied the feasibility of replacing lighting currently used throughout the city with LED lights. A recommendation was adopted to implement this replacement through a pilot project, where economically feasible.

"Decision Night" on the 2011 - 2012 Tax Budget is May 17. Our City Charter requires adoption no later than May 30. All Budget Work Sessions are open to the public. □

Submitted by Roseanne Klein, Budget Chair



## VOTER SERVICE

Voter Service is the heart of the League of Women Voters! And we need your help. Each summer, the White Plains League, along with Leagues from all over the county, assists in the preparation of the **Voters Guide**. This includes attending one meeting, writing letters to and following up with candidates and working with the questionnaires the candidates complete to prepare the information that will be included in the **Voters Guide**. Willing hands and some computer skills are required.

It is time for new blood to be involved in these activities, and I urge interested members to contact me to discuss how you can participate. □



Barbara Cooper, Voter Service Co-chair  
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## IN MEMORIAM

White Plains Leaguers and city residents were saddened to learn of the death of Marjorie Priestley. She was not only a past president of the White Plains League of Women voters, but a member of the executive committee of the LWV of Westchester. So it was fitting that we should have honored her when we first began the tradition of recognizing outstanding contributors to the League at our annual winter fundraising party. Marj was a long-time member of the White Plains Planning Board and served as its vice-chair. She also was a leader of Westchester 2000, a project undertaken by the League and many civic organizations to improve the functioning of Westchester government. She was a founder of the White Plains Beautification Foundation and served as its president for a dozen years. There is hardly an organization devoted to the betterment of our city that has not enjoyed the enthusiasm and hard work of this very special person, who will be greatly missed. □

## 2011 CALENDAR

- |        |          |  |
|--------|----------|--|
| Wed    | April 20 | LWV Board Meeting at 1:15<br>Home of Lila Salzman, 8 Mileview Ave.   |
| Sun.   | May 1    | City Budget Brunch at 12:30<br>Home of Roseanne Klein, 58 Midchester Ave.  |
| Mon.   | May 2    | Common Council at City Hall<br>Common Council Chambers<br>7:00pm Citizens to be Heard<br>7:30pm Regular Monthly Meeting    |
| Thurs. | May 5    | School Board Candidates Meeting<br>And Proposed School Budget Presentation<br>7:30pm at White Plains High School - Room B1 |
| Mon.   | May 9    | Board of Education 7:30pm at Ed House  |
| Wed.   | May 11   | LWV Board Meeting at 1:15<br>Home of Harriet Slivka, 114 Havilands Lane  |
| Tues.  | May 17   | School Board and Budget Vote<br>noon to 9pm  |
| Wed.   | May 25   | Annual WPLWV Meeting   |
| Thurs. | June 23  | Picnic   |