

Rochester/Metro League of Women Voters

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.

Voter education is one of the League's most important functions, and the League encourages all citizens to register and to cast an informed vote.

The League does not support political parties or candidates, but does take stands on important issues after careful study and research.

Membership in the League is open to all citizens of voting age.

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March League Day: Health Care Reform: Is a Single Payer System the Answer?



Join Us

Thursday, March 6, 2008

10:00 am to 11:30 am

1600 East Avenue

Speaker:

Dr. Emily Queenan

Member, Physicians for a National Health Program
Chief Resident, Department of Family Medicine
University of Rochester
Clinical Practice at Brown Square Health Center

Health Care is in crisis in the United States with millions of people uninsured or under-insured and with medical costs rising rapidly. Attend and learn about the plan supported by the Physicians for a National Health Program. There will be ample time to ask questions.

See article on page 7.

Committees At Work

Local Government discussed: types of action that could be taken regarding reform of Local Development Corporations; what approvals from LWV are needed; and contacting other groups/agencies for help in determining legal obligations of LDCs.

Natural Resources discussed final details for showing of THIRST on League Day at WXXI; possible for-

mat for May League Day on Great Lakes; and getting volunteers for Wetlands Model demonstrations at Brooks Hill School on March 13 and Seneca Park Zoo in May.

Social Policy worked on plans for League Days in March and April on Health Care.

See committee dates on calendar; place, time and phone contacts are at bottom of page. All the committees welcome new members.

From Your President

by Dorothy Borgus



Some people think local government isn't interesting. Not true. It's the level of government closest to the public and the one that impacts our daily lives the most.

Open the local newspaper or turn on the TV, and you will see firsthand the serious local issues that have Rochester and Monroe County residents in an uproar.

A school district project is overspent by millions and remains unfinished years after the project deadline. A public defender is selected, the process rife with partisan politics. "Must-have" sports complexes like Frontier Field and Paetec Park are unable to pay their bills despite untold promises and heavy subsidizing with our tax dollars. Who can forget the fast ferry? Now, over 16 million dollars has already been spent on Renaissance Square, the most expensive public works

LDCs – What Next?

Our board has approved the recommendations in the Center for Governmental Research report on Local Development Corporations that called for legislation to provide for increased oversight. Working alone, our local league cannot get this legislation enacted. We have written an article for the next New York State Voter to inform League members across the state of the issues detailed in the CGR report and to suggest that they look into LDCs in their own areas. Once information is collected on LDCs statewide, we will collaborate with other local leagues and LWVNY to work for the necessary legislation. In the meantime, we intend to learn more about LDCs.

Please join us as we continue studying LDCs and planning the reform effort. We will be meeting on Thursdays, February 21, March 13, and April 10 at 10 am at the home of Bee Bibby. For further information, contact Judy Weinstein at 442-9815 or j.weinstein.roc@gmail.com.

Judy Weinstein, *Chair Local Government Committee*

project in Rochester history, and right now no one knows exactly where the money went. The sad truth is that a preliminary design hasn't even been completed, not a single shovel has been put in the ground, and the project may never happen. Local politics is boring, you say? Hardly.

Where does this end? I KNOW where it starts.... citizen complacency. When was the last time you attended a school board meeting? County Legislature? City Council? Town Board meeting?

It's time to push away from the TV, put down the sports page, and pay attention to local government. Each year the Rochester League prints 5,000 copies of Who Represents You at a cost of about \$1,000. and distributes them free of charge throughout the Monroe County area. It's a list of your elected representatives complete with telephone numbers and mailing and email addresses. Use it!! Engage yourself in grassroots politics where budget gaps begin, cost overruns start, and pie-in-the-sky projects are born.

We've learned Lesson One: Our governments and those we elect don't always do their homework well.

Lesson Two ought to be: Get involved!

Dorothy

Thank You! Thank You!

A big thank you to Beverly Verbridge, Betsy McIsaac, Phyllis Masters, Jane Schmitt, Sheila Abelling, Shirley Eberly, Sula Baxter, Dorothy Borgus and Barbara Hendry for helping sort absentee ballot on primary day. They not only helped with the electoral process but also helped raise money for the League.



The Voting Machine Quandary

January 2008 has been a very eventful month in New York State's quest for reliable and secure voting machines!

A little background information – Last year the Department of Justice sued New York State for not complying with the Help American Vote Act (HAVA) passed in 2002 to deal with the voting problems in Florida in 2000. As part of that suit, Federal Judge Gary Sharpe castigated NY state election officials for paralysis and incompetence in meeting HAVA requirements and threatened to send the state election commissioners to jail! In December, Judge Sharpe agreed to a state plan whereby voting machines accessible to the disabled would be available in every polling place around the state by the September 2008 primary and that all lever machines would be replaced by the fall 2009 elections. As part of this plan, the State Board of Elections was to meet on January 23rd and certify which voting machines would be used in New York, or else a special master would be appointed to make the decision. By February 8th, counties should have chosen which machines to use this year.

That's where things get exciting! If any of you follow Bo Lipari's blog, New Yorkers for Verified Voting, at www.nyvv.org, you know he was very optimistic on Sunday, January 20th. Sources had told him that only one system that was a combination of ballot marking device and optical scanner might be authorized at the Board meeting on Wednesday, January 23rd.

However, at the Wednesday meeting, two members of the four person State Board of Elections delayed and prevented any discussion or decision taking place for seven hours. All the good government groups, including the League, were very disappointed and troubled. Bo wrote about "an appalling display of how willing are some in the State Board of Elections to represent the interests of DRE (direct recording electronic machine) vendors even when this directly conflicts with the interests of voters and the requirements of state law." Things were really dire!

But then on Thursday, January 24th, the whole atmosphere changed! The State Board of Elections approved three accessible optical scan

ballot marking devices. Counties could choose which machine they would place in each polling site in the 2008 elections.

Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director of the LWV asserted, "Bravo. After years of delay and indecision, New York is finally on the road to a secure, accessible and auditable voting system." Bo was ecstatic on his blog, "My deepest thanks to everyone who fought this long, difficult battle. This is only Round One, and I promise you we will have much, much more to do to guarantee that our elections belong to the public, and are transparent and observable. What was once only a slogan representing what we fought for has now become a reality - Paper Ballots for New York!" Great news!!!

BUT – on Monday, January 28th DRE vendor Liberty applied for a temporary restraining order in Albany Supreme Court, asserting that their DRE machine should have been certified.

To further complicate issues, on Tuesday, January 29th, two of the three approved devices were decertified!!! New York State requires a full face ballot, and these two machines were probably decertified because they did not create a marked full face ballot, after the vote. (That's why there was only one machine to view when some of you went to the Medley Centre on January 31st to see the machines demonstrated!)

As of the end of January, there was only one possible certified machine to be used for the disabled in each polling place – a ballot marking device/combination ballot scanner submitted by Sequoia Voting Systems. New York State is under court order to buy at least one disabled-accessible machine for each polling place by September and to replace all lever machines by fall 2009.

In the meantime, to every Leaguer who wrote or emailed your county Board of Elections, thank you. Your action supported our State League representatives, Bo, Barb and Aimee Allaud, *the League Elections Specialist*, by showing how important this issue is to all voters.

Barb Hendry, *VP Voters Service*

Addendum: According to the D&C on 2/05/08, Supreme Court Judge Kimberly O'Connor ruled that the disqualification of Liberty Election Systems' touch screen machine was "arbitrary and

The Voting Machine Quandary *cont'd from p4*

capricious and contrary to law". The D&C article further stated, "Barbara Bartoletti of the League of Women Voters disagreed, saying touch-screen machines are a 'failed technology' that other states have purchased and then scrapped...This essentially is not a usable machine for the disabled community."

On 2/08/08 the D&C reported " A court order issued Thursday provided a resolution for two companies seeking the lucrative opportunity to sell their voting machines in New York...County election officials will now have four choices in buying machines that must be available for disabled voters in the fall presidential election." Undoubtedly by the time this VOTER reaches you, the situation will have changed again.

Jane Schmitt, *VOTER Editor*

Bio Fuels – Promises and Problems

Federation of Monroe County Environmentalists (FMCE) and the Center for Sustainable Living are sponsoring this program.

Monday March 24, 2008

Time: 7:00 – 900 PM

Auditorium, Brighton Town Hall
6300 Elmwood Ave.

Speakers: Jason Masters, President of Northern Biodiesel and Jeff Gutterman, Chairman of Delphi's Next Generation Fuels Forum.

There is no charge.

Ann Jones, *LWVRMA representative to FMCE*

Immigration Follow Up

Well, it's done... signed, sealed and delivered.

Our consensus on Immigration taken on January 10th was a difficult task for each of you who attended. Thanks to our Discussion Leader, Shirley Eberly, and our able study committee - we did it!

What is our consensus? Well, as you know, ours is only one part of a national process. We will be told in April what the cumulative national consensus is that will be approved at the National Convention in June.

In preparation for the January 10th meeting, we prepared a handout that included pros and cons on each issue and some basic facts that could help frame the discussion. If you would like a copy, contact me at georgiatd@frontiernet.net, or call me at 585-787-9692.

Again – thanks to Shirley Eberly.

Georgia DeGregorio, *Chair of Immigrant Study Group*

Issues the LWV Cares About

Program is the League's basis for both advocacy and education efforts. It is based on member study and agreement on selected issues. Program also involves concerted efforts by the League to achieve public policies consistent with its positions. League lobbying promotes or opposes specific pieces of legislation accordingly. The LWUS public policy positions are the official statements of position for each program area and also reflect the program adopted by the most recent national Convention.

Sula Baxter, *VP Program*

Concerning Health Care Reform, the LWVUS states:

The League believes that quality, affordable health care should be available to all U.S. residents. Other health care policy goals should include equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care. Furthermore, the League believes that all Americans should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long term care and mental health care.

LWVNY Position on Health Care reads: Support of:

A single payer concept as an acceptable approach to implementing League positions on equitable access and cost containment measures to assure a basic level of quality physical and mental health care for all state residents including regulatory incentives to encourage development of cost-effective alternative methods of delivery; funding for health promotions and disease prevention programs, provisions for effective citizen participation in health policy decisions uniform eligibility and coverage of basic health care costs through public financing.

For more information about LWV positions on health care and other issues, visit lwv.org, lwvny@lwvny.org and lwv-rma.org.

Whose Water Is It?

Introduction and Background:

“In 1988 the Nova Group, an Ontario consulting firm, secured a permit from the province to withdraw 158 million gallons of water a year from Lake Superior and ship it by tanker to arid areas in Asia. Although the permit was issued with scant attention, the news of this plan spread rapidly and environmental groups, politicians, and ordinary citizens on both sides of the Great Lakes quickly condemned the plan and the permit was rescinded.

The significance of the Nova plan can be best understood in the context of the world’s water situation. Although 70% of the Earth’s surface is water, only 3% is fresh water. Of the 3%, over 2% is bound up in icebergs and permanent snow cover or is very deep below the surface. Of the remaining 1%, only about half is available from surface water or groundwater. All totaled, only about .0008% of the Earth’s water supply is available for use by humans and other species, and over half of that is polluted.

According to the United Nations, nearly 20% of the world’s population lack adequate supplies of fresh water. The United Nations predicts that if current consumption patterns continue, two out of every three persons on Earth will live in water-stressed conditions by the year 2025. Water scarcity already affects every continent and is growing due to population growth, urbanization, and the increase in industrial and domestic uses.

At the heart of the world’s water problem is the misfit between where people are and where the water is. The regions most severely impacted are home to the most rapidly increasing populations. Some of the most vexing natural resource issues in southwestern United States involve water scarcity, pitting rural agricultural users and Native American tribes against growing urban populations.”

Water Management Frameworks:

“Long standing boundary water disputes between the United States and Canada were first addressed on the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909” and it “defined boundary waters as those lakes and rivers along the international boundary between the two nations; it explicitly excludes tributary waters

that flow into the lakes.” The Treaty “also called for the creation of the International Joint Commission (IJC), a representative body comprised of three Canadians and three U.S. representatives and charged with the resolution of situations unique to the boundary waters.”

“In 1985 the Great Lakes governors and the premiers of Ontario and Quebec signed the Great Lakes Charter...Although not legally binding, the Charter clearly articulates environmental protections and applies to the tributaries within the Great Lakes Basin, not just the lakes themselves.”

“Notably, under the Great Lakes Charter, parties agreed to prohibit new diversions of Great Lakes water averaging more than five million gallons per day over a thirty-day period without approval of all parties. Congress endorsed these provisions through amendments to the Water Resources Development Act of 1986... As significant as this legislation was, it lacked legally binding authority over water diversion decisions in Canada. The 1998 the Nova permit brought this to a head.”

“Congress responded by including provisions in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 that expressly mandate that exports of Great Lakes water have the unanimous approval of all eight Great Lakes state governors” (NY, PA, OH, MI, IN, IL, WI, MN). “As with the 1986 Act, this provision does not bind Canada.”

Conclusion:

“Decades of disputes over use of the water of the Great Lakes came to a head in 1998 when the Nova Group permit was issued. The resulting attempts to protect the Great Lakes Basin through interstate and international arrangements have yet to satisfactorily resolve the potential for water diversion outside the Basin. Unless and until the eight Great Lakes states and the two provinces make significant progress on establishing binding arrangements for management of Great Lakes water and adopt clear and meaningful conservation plans, the Lakes remain vulnerable to waste and overuse and possible threats from outside interests.”

The above contains excerpts from **The North American Great Lakes: Whose Water Is It?** written for the Rochester Committee for Scientific Information by Ann Howard, JD Science, Technology, Society/ Public Policy at Rochester Institute of Technology

MARCH 2008

MARCH 2008						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3 VOTER Deadline	4	5	6 League Day Health Care Reform 10:00 am	7	8
9	10	11 5:30 pm Social Policy Committee*	12	13 Executive Com. 9:00am Naturalization Ceremony Local Gov't.* 10:00am	14	15
16	17	18	19 Natural Resources Committee 9:30 am*	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Board Meeting 1:45 PM	28	29
30	31					

APRIL 2008

APRIL 2008						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 VOTER Deadline	2	3 League Day Health Care (cont'd.) 10:00 am	4	5
6	7	8 Social Policy Committee 5:30 pm * Naturalization Ceremony	9	10 Exec. Com 9:00am Local Gov't. 10:00 am* Naturalization Ceremony	11	12
13	14	15	16 Natural Resources Committee* 9:30am	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Board Meeting 1:45 PM	25	26
27	28	29	30			

*Board meets in the Bagel Bin Conference Room, 2600 Elmwood Avenue, at 1:45 PM on the fourth Thursday of each month.
Executive Committee meets at the Town & Country Restaurant, 3205 Chili Avenue, at 9:00 AM on the 2nd Thursday of each month.*

*League Days are normally held at 1600 East Avenue at 10:00 AM on the first Thursday of the month.
Parking is at the rear of the building.*

*Natural Resources meets at the home of Ann Jones, 244-9337; Social Policy meets at the home of
Joan Rosenthal, 244-6255 for Social Policy details, call Georgia DiGregorio at 787-9692*

Local Government meets at the home of Bee Bibby, for Local Government details call Judy Weinstein at 442-9815.

AM Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Monroe County Office Building, 39 W. Main St;
PM Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Federal Court House at 100 State Street.

League Days are open to the public. Calendar information subject to change.

For more complete information consult our website at www.lwv-rma.org, call the office at 262-3730 or e-mail us at lwvma@frontiernet.net

Health Care Reform

Right now, health care is administered by a profit-driven insurance and pharmaceutical system. Those in favor of universal access to health care believe that we need to reframe the question of providing health care from “How do we provide health insurance for all?” to “How can we deliver the best health care to all?”

Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) is advocating for a single-payer system or “Medicare for All” plan. The following questions about a single-payer system are often asked:

Is National Health Insurance “socialized medicine”?

No. Socialized medicine is a system in which doctors and hospitals work for the government and draw salaries from the government. Within the single-payer system the government pays for care that is delivered in the private sector. Doctors are in private practice and are paid on a fee-for-service basis from government funds. The government does not own or manage the doctors’ medical practices or hospitals.

Won’t this raise my taxes?

The public financing already funneled to Medicare and Medicaid would be retained. A payroll tax would replace all other employer expenses for employees’ health care. An income tax would take the place of all current premiums, co-pays, deductibles, any and all out of pocket payments.

Join the League Today!



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Check Amount: _____

Level of Membership: _____

Yes! I would like to get The VOTER in my E-Mail!

Please send this form and your check payable to
League of Women Voters/RMA to:
LWV/RMA, Times Square Building,
45 Exchange Street, Suite 508,
Rochester, New York 14614

What will be covered?

All medically necessary care, including doctor visits, hospital care, prescriptions, mental health services, nursing home care, rehab, home care, eye care and dental care.

The League of Women Voters, both in their National and New York State positions believe that quality affordable health care should be available to all U.S. residents. Furthermore the League believes that all Americans should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care.

There are various plans, private and public, proposed by many politicians and organizations.

Come and learn about one widely advocated plan. There will be plenty of time for questions after Dr. Queenan’s presentation.

For more information check the web sites of PNHP www.pnhp.org and Health Care Now healthcare-now.org.

Joan Rosenthal, *Social Policy Committee*

League Members, want to keep up on your favorite League issue? Voting Machines? Health Care? Government Reform? Environment? Email stephanie@lwvny.org and ask to receive Action Alerts directly.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Individual/Associate.	\$70
Household.	\$100
Susan B. Anthony/Frederick Douglass	\$150
Carrie Chapman Catt	\$200
Student (full-time/under 25)	\$25
Low income, call office	Sliding Scale



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**April VOTER Deadline is
March 3rd!**

Goals of the League of Women Voters:

- To encourage informed citizen's participation in government and politics
- To influence public policy through education and advocacy

Science may have found a cure for most evils;
but it has found no remedy for the worst of
them all – the apathy of human beings.
Helen Keller My Religion