

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of SCHENECTADY COUNTY, NEW YORK

BULLETIN

February 2008

FEBRUARY EVENTS

We're Doing It Again!

OUR ANNUAL PLANNING SUPPER
AT SONIA'S

Wednesday, February 13 from 6:00-9:00 p.m.
at Sonia Rubenstein's 841 Londonderry Rd.

Please come! We need all your ideas to help us keep our league fresh and relevant.
We will discuss and decide upon next year's programs and issues.

FOOD!

Bring your favorite salad.....hot,

cold,

green,

pasta,

fruit.

Whatever strikes your fancy!

FUN!

Call Connie Young 393-7061 to let us know that you're coming. Limited parking. Try to car pool.

****Please bring this issue of the Bulletin with you as it contains the local League's program, the national League Public Policy Positions and the New York League Legislative Agenda.

Friendly Lunch

Tuesday, February 26, 2008 at 12:00 noon

Professor Vicki Martinez will make a presentation on current Border Issues in Humanities 112 at Union College. Vicki has studied these issues with students on a mini-term abroad as they traveled our southern border with Mexico. There is more information inside the Bulletin.

Please mark your calendar and join us for this very timely and interesting talk and slide show.
You will find a map of the campus at <http://www.union.edu/Map/> Humanities is building # 22.

President's Page

Greetings,

"The League and our allies had won!" reported Barbara Bartoletti, our NYS Legislative Director, after the State Election Commissioners voted on 1/24/08 to approve three paper ballot/optical scan machines (none were DRE technology).

"Politically this is a huge victory for the League against a very well funded vendor and their lobbying firm. The voters of New York, of course, are the real winners and will use machines that are secure, accurate, recountable, and accessible." She goes on to explain that they still need to go through the certification process; however, it is most likely that one of the three machines will also be the machine likely to replace the lever machines in 2009.

We salute the hard work of Aimee Allaud, our NYS Board Elections Specialist, Bo Lipari, our NYS League's representative to the Citizens Election Modernization Advisory Committee, Barbara Bartoletti, Betsey Swan, the NYS LWV's Legislative Analyst, and the many others who have been working on this issue.

We also commend our local Schenectady Board of Elections for inviting public comments on the voting machines to be purchased for our County. When government encourages citizen input, we all benefit.

Citizen input is also being generated at Union College thanks to Lynda Nichols, our Membership Chair, and Professor Zoe Oxley, League member and Chair of Political Science at UC. Six of us League members met today with students from Zoe's class on 'Women in Politics' to talk about the League's activities and engage the students in projects related to our program, such as social issues, health care, alternative treatment courts, elected officials, as well as exploring student awareness and impression of the League. Watch for information and programs in the next few months, generated by these bright young people.

Stay engaged and stay warm. Be sure to join our discussion of next year's agenda at our annual pot-luck planning meeting, February 13th, at 6pm at Sonia's. Hope to see you there! Joanne

COME ALL TO THE ANNUAL PLANNING SUPPER AT SONIA'S

February 13 from 6:00-9:00 at Sonia Rubenstein's 841 Londonderry Rd.

Please come we need all the ideas from all our members to keep our league fresh and relevant. The frame for next years programs and issues will be discussed and decided upon.

Every one is asked to contribute their favorite salad, hot, cold, green, pasta, fruit what ever strikes your fancy. Make your reservation with Connie Young 393-7061. Call a league member and car pool, this is always a fun evening

March 12 7-9pm The Greening of Schenectady at Proctors Alley

March 25 12-1pm Dennis Packer Update Dept Social Services
106 Erie Blvd

NOTES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

We are continuing to work on our plans for our March 12 presentation at Proctor's Rob Alley. The topic will be energy efficiency and green construction as wise, forward-thinking business decisions. Our presenters include Philip Morris, CEO of Proctor's, Mona Golub of Price Chopper, the Chair of the Clifton Park Library board and the architect who planned their green construction, and someone from the NYSERDA office.

We continue our study of aquifer issues with a power point presentation by Jason Pelton, Schenectady County Groundwater Planner. We have invited him to do a public presentation in the McChesney Room at noon on Monday, April 7. This presentation gives a good basic understanding of what the aquifer is, how it works, and the agencies in charge of protecting it.

We're always happy to see new faces at our meetings, which are on the first Monday of every month at noon. If you are interested in attending please call Nancy Peterson at 374-5810 to find out the location.

NOTES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The Environment Committee is working on plans for a public meeting on Wed., March 12 from 7-9. The topic is energy conservation and the focus will be green construction of local public buildings.

We're pulling together the coalition of environmental groups that cosponsored our Step It Up events to help work on this event. Currently this includes the Green Sanctuary from the Unitarian Church, ECOS, SCEAC, and the City Energy Board. We hope to involve the Sierra Club and ARISE. Our big news is that Philip Morris will be one of our presenters, and the atrium at Proctors will be our location. Other presenters include Mona Golub for the Price Chopper headquarters project, and the Chair of the Clifton Park Library board and the architect who planned their green construction, someone from the NYSERDA office.

We're always happy to see new faces at our meetings, which are on the first Monday of every month at noon at the Muddy Cup near Proctor's. We are also working on a study of the Great Flats Aquifer.

For over a year, we have had meetings, educational programs, and preparation and at last on Wednesday, January the 9th, the League of Women Voters of Schenectady County held its immigration consensus meeting. Although many of the questions were rather general in terms, and sometimes we weren't sure as to the exact meaning of some of the questions, we had a very productive meeting. There was a good turnout, and everyone seemed to be well informed and ready to tackle the difficult issue of immigration. It was a very interesting evening with many different opinions and points of view, but everyone's opinions were respected and considered. After sometimes-heated discussion, we came to consensus on all but three of the questions, and finished on time. That's not bad considering there were a total of 32 questions! Now we will wait for the National League's policy statement on immigration.

The immigration committee thanks everyone who attended and helped to answer the questions. Possibly people came out for the coffee and cookies. Many thanks go out to the immigration committee members: Ellen Blake, Julie Burgess, Joan Elliott, Elaine Klein, Pat MacKinnon, Judy Middelkoop, Inge-Lise Pangburn, Helga Schroeter, Joanne Tobiessen, and Connie Young who worked so hard to prepared for consensus and were at the meeting to help clarify issues when necessary and to make sure the consensus meeting went smoothly. Special thanks go to Pat for preparing the projection of the questions so we could all see the question being discussed. Also special thanks to Nancy Snyder for being a superb moderator and keeping us on track; and to Kate Hull for a wonderful job as recorder. We couldn't have done it without all of you!

CURRENT BORDER ISSUES: A Talk by Victoria Martinez

The immigration consensus meeting might be over, but the importance of immigration issues most certainly has not diminished. On Tuesday, February 26, 2008 at 12:00 noon Victoria Martinez will make a presentation on current border issues in room 112 of the Humanities building at Union College. The following link has a map of the campus: <http://www.union.edu/Map/> and the humanities building is building # 22.

Victoria Martinez is an Associate Professor of Spanish at Union College. She was instrumental in arranging for the Conjuro Teatro to come to Union College last October and present the play "Los Trazos del Viento", a very riveting play about the murder of Mexican women. As part of her curriculum she led a group of students to study border relations between the US and Mexico. Victoria will be talking about the group's experiences, the various people they met, and topics they discussed. Her talk will be accompanied by slides to allow us to visualize their experiences.

The main points she will be talking about will include the fence, immigration, crossing the border, realities on the American side, and realities on the Mexican side.

Please mark your calendar and join us for this very timely and interesting talk and slide show about border relations on Tuesday February 26, 2008 at noon in room 112 of the Humanities building at Union College.

League of Woman Voters of Schenectady County Local Program 2007-2008

Justice and the Law

- Act to improve the local criminal justice system.
- Support a strengthened Probation Department and effective programs of rehabilitation in the County Jail, along with an adequate budget.
- Support a release on recognizance program—excluding those who are considered to be a danger to themselves or the community.
- Facilitate the implementation of alternative courts (*problem solving courts*) in Schenectady County, and promote collaborations to support them.

Local Government

- Monitor activities of county governmental units, including town boards, the Schenectady City Council and the Schenectady County Legislature; monitor activities of other quasi-governmental units, public authorities and agencies such as Metroplex, IDAs and Planning Boards; monitor activities of elected public school Boards of Education.
- Support standards of high professional qualifications and political nonpartisanship in manager form of government.

Children at Risk

- Support efforts on behalf of children at risk.
- Collaborate with other organizations to identify the needs of girls in Schenectady County and to educate the community about their needs and challenges.

Local Education

- Monitor local initiatives related to charter schools and financing education.

Environmental Issues

- Study water resources with a focus on the aquifer, and work to protect the water resources of Schenectady County.

Local Health Services

- Monitor planning for local health care service delivery and educate residents of Schenectady County about local health care issues.

PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

League of Women Voters of the United States

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote. Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation. Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

Election Process

Apportionment. Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

Campaign Finance. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

Selection of the President. Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct-popular-vote and work to abolish the Electoral College. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.

Citizen Rights

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation. Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision making.

Individual Liberties. Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.

Public Policy on Reproductive Choices. Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Congress and the Presidency

Congress. Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision-making capability and effective performance.

The Presidency. Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

United Nations

Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.

Trade

Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries

Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

Arms Control

Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

Military Policy and Defense Spending

Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

Natural Resources

Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

Resource Management

Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control

Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

Air Quality. Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

Energy. Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

Land Use. Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.

Water Resources. Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

Waste Management. Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

Nuclear Issues. Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

Public Participation

Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

Agriculture Policy

Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

SOCIAL POLICY

Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

Equality of Opportunity

Equal Rights. Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.

Education, Employment and Housing. Support equal access to education, employment and housing.

Fiscal Policy

Tax Policy. Support adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that relies primarily on a broad-based income tax.

Federal Deficit. Promote responsible deficit policies.

Funding of Entitlements. Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

Health Care

Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Income Assistance. Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.

Support Services. Provide for essential support services.

Housing Supply. Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

Child Care

Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.

Violence Prevention

Support violence prevention programs in communities.

Gun Control

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

Urban Policy

Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

Death Penalty

The LWVUS supports the abolition of the death penalty.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among levels of government, effective enforcement and well defined channels for citizen input and review.