



# The Broome-Tioga Voter

Bulletin of the *League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties*

Volume 59, Number 8

July/August, 2007

## League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties

P.O. Box 944  
Vestal, NY 13851-0944  
(607)772-4936  
www.lwv-broometioga.org  
lwvmyers@stny.rr.org

### Co-Presidents

Clare Simeone 775-0035  
cas88@earthlink.net

Anne Taft 724-6830  
anci@stny.rr.com

### 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Pres./Ed. Finance

Carol Oestrich 797-0026  
coestrich@aol.com

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Pres./Program

Mary Johnson 797-3225  
mjohnson23@stny.rr.com

### Secretary

Joanne Gee 775-4856  
raygee@echoes.net

### Treasurer

Alice Brooks 754-8277  
[fbrooksjr@stny.rr.com](mailto:fbrooksjr@stny.rr.com)

Jane Ebert 785-0323  
[wsebert@yahoo.com](mailto:wsebert@yahoo.com)

### Finance Drive

Pat Giglio 648-5116  
[pgiglio@chowc.org](mailto:pgiglio@chowc.org)

### Voter Service

Doris Lawton 723-0890  
[dal22@verizon.net](mailto:dal22@verizon.net)

### Election Reform

Jane Park 748-4192  
[janepark@stny.rr.com](mailto:janepark@stny.rr.com)

### Directors at Large

Carole Coppens 625-4362  
[ccoppens@stny.rr.com](mailto:ccoppens@stny.rr.com)  
Sandy Kosty 754-8051  
[dkosty@aol.com](mailto:dkosty@aol.com)



**Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director,** speaking at our Annual Meeting on May 8. Her spirited and informative talk followed our productive business meeting, a delightful social hour, and a delicious dinner. It was a great wrap-up for our 2006-2007 program year!

For more on Barbara's League activities, see the Election Reform article on page 5.

## Inside this issue

CFE & Gambling Issues . . . .	4
Co-Presidents' Message . . . . .	2
Election Calendar . . . . .	6
State Convention Report . . . .	3-4
Member News . . . . .	2
NYS Election Reform . . . . .	5
Voter Editor Wanted . . . . .	2

## Co-Presidents' Message

The new League year is off to a great start! You've got co-presidents for this two-year cycle, and it's working out well. Clare Simeone is proving to be a hard-working co-president, freeing me to spend more time on some important personal projects. We both get a chance to learn new skills and enjoy the satisfaction of working together to lead this wonderful League.

As I write this column, I'm enjoying the beauties of the season. I took a day-trip to Albany and enjoyed the lush greens of the grasses and trees everywhere. Here at home, I'm delighted with the colorful flowers in the foundation plantings around my home and the variety of birds and their chirping in my neighborhood. The goslings at Otsiningo Park are growing fast under the watchful eyes of their parents.

At the Joint Old/New Board meeting held in June, we discussed program for the coming year and came up with a list of topics we'd like to cover in our program meetings. During the summer, volunteers will be finding speakers to help us learn more about each topic. We'll be having a Legislative Breakfast in November, as we did last year, and the Social Policy Committee will once again hold a workshop in April to encourage women to run for public office. We have a lot to look forward to!

Clare and I wish you all a good summer! We are looking forward to seeing you all again in September.

~ Anne Taft, Co-President

## Wanted: *Voter* Editor

This job requires a computer with appropriate software and a black-and-white printer. For the last 12 years, the *Voter* has been produced using ordinary word processor software (MS Word or WordPerfect). Desktop Publishing software could also be used. You can use whatever software you are most comfortable with.

An artistic sense would be a plus to make use of white space and appropriate copyright-free graphics to make our *Voter* both visually appealing and informative.

The *Voter* comes out in September, October, November/December, January, February, March, April, May (Call to Annual Meeting), and July. The deadline for submissions is normally the second Tuesday of the month before. Most submissions are sent to you by e-mail.

We want to make this as easy as possible for the new editor. Outgoing Editor Jane Park will turn over her files and help you get started. Jane and her predecessor, Anne Taft, will be glad to offer advice any time you run into difficulty. Since we know how difficult it can be for an editor to do her own proofreading, a board member always does the final proofreading before copy goes to the printer.

If you are interested or have any questions about the job, contact Clare or Anne.

### Member News

A hearty welcome to our newest members:

Cinda Gausman, Vestal  
Lucy Loewenstein, Binghamton  
Mariliz Pines, Vestal  
Sondra Pruden, Endwell

## State Convention “Reaches Out/ Reaches In”

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Biennial Convention of the League of Women Voters of New York State was held May 16-18 at the Crowne Plaza, White Plains. The theme of the convention was “Reaching Out/ Reaching In,” and the program included a wide variety of workshops and presentations covering programs and issues of interest to the League and ways to improve League operation.

Alice Brooks, Clare Simeone, and Anne Taft represented our League at the convention and reported that it was an exciting and informative event. (Some of the “reaching out” topics were so compelling that they will be featured in our local programs during 2007-2008.) Here is a brief report on what they learned and did.

### Electoral College Reform – A New Angle

Delegates voted to study signing on to the *Compact for the Popular Vote*. This is a slick end-run around the cumbersome process of amending our Constitution to achieve election of the president by popular vote. It achieves the result of election of the President by direct popular vote, while still using the form of the Electoral College. Identical laws must be passed by legislatures of enough states that their combined electoral votes are enough to elect a President. As soon as enough states have passed the required legislation, these states award their electoral votes to the candidate who has the majority of the popular vote nation-wide, regardless of whether that candidate receives the majority of the votes in each state. These laws would go into effect as soon as enough states have passed identical laws to give a candidate who wins the popular vote the majority of the electoral votes.

Election of the President by popular vote has several advantages. Every vote counts equally. Candidates would concentrate their campaigning in the most densely populated areas and could not afford to ignore states whose electoral votes they were sure of, as they do under the current system. Finally, recent polls show that over 70% of Americans support popular election of the President.

## Universal Health Care in Our Time?

Dr. Oliver Fein, M.D., Professor of Clinical Medicine and Clinical Public Health at Weill Medical College of Cornell University, gave a Powerpoint presentation on the Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP). Dr. Fein is chair of PNHP, as well as chair of the Global Health Consortium.

Dr. Fein reviewed the history of health insurance from 1936 to the present and explained the problems of recent private insurance plans which we have all become aware of and perhaps experienced. Major problems are the escalating costs and the limiting of choices offered, be it hospital, doctor, or prescribed medication allowed under different plans. He gave a brief analysis of the national health plans of other countries and of the several state health plans attempted in the U.S.

The PNHP models its plan on Medicare and is a Single Payer Program. Dr. Fein noted that the administrative costs of many private insurance plans have risen 2005% since 1970, and overhead and profit represent 16%-30% of insurance expenditures. Medicare administration costs 2%-3%. He also explained how this will NOT be socialized medicine run by the government.

The delegates adopted the following position: “The League supports the single payer concept approach to implementing League positions on equitable access and cost containment for all residents.”

### Vote 18

Walt Townes, creator of Vote 18, demonstrated his interactive voting game. He took us from the rule of King George over the colonies, through the Revolution, the Civil War, and the constitutional amendments which gave every man and woman who is at least 18 the right to vote. This lively, thought-provoking game is designed for students from 12 to 20. We are already sharing the Vote 18 DVD and lesson plan with a local high school and hope to bring the program to our area.

*(continued on next page)*

## Other Convention Highlights

- Workshops on new voting machines and on League fundraising
- Stimulating keynote addresses on the First Amendment, especially the rights of journalists to honor their confidential sources, and on women's role in keeping society civil
- "Moments in the Sun" – a tradition at state conventions offering each League two minutes to highlight successful accomplishments during the previous year. Our president gave special mention to the excellent program on gambling presented by Carol Oestrich and her committee. Hearing what other Leagues are doing was inspiring. Some activities, such as candidates' forums, voter registration, and legislative breakfasts, were mentioned often. However, each local League seems to have its own special approach or a unique idea.
- Our League's *Voter* was recognized as the best newsletter published by the eight Leagues with 101-150 members.
- The budget was approved; the State Per Member Payment was not changed.
- New officers were elected. Martha Kennedy stepped up from Membership VP to President, and Marcia Merrins stepped down from President to Membership VP. (Marcia is also now President of her local League!)

## CFE & Gambling Issues: Update

The Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) and the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) are asking the NYS Board of Regents to ensure

- that programs created with the new aid through the Contracts for Excellence predominantly benefit the neediest students,
- that school districts be required to target programs in schools with high concentrations of high needs students,
- that contracts be clear, simple, and easily understandable and indicate how the funding will be spent to serve the neediest students, and
- that there be clear uniform guidelines for meaningful public participation.

The United States Department of Interior ruled that its 1993 approval of the compact between New York State and the Oneida Indian Nation was valid. There will be no revenues for the state from that casino.

There is also a question about the continued operation of Vernon and Tioga Downs. The manager of both tracks, Nevada Gold & Casinos Inc., has sold its membership interest. Vernon Downs and the other racinos want a larger portion of the revenue. Currently, 92% goes to gamblers. The remaining 8% is split with 50% of it going to education aid, 10% to the state lottery division for operation and administration of the video lottery machines, 8% for advertising, and 32% to the racetrack and horse owners. An increase to 42% for five years and then 40% thereafter is being sought during this legislative session.

~ Carol Oestrich

### Identification Statement

The Broome-Tioga Voter is published 9 times a year (January, February, March, April, May, July/August, September, October, and November/December) by the League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties, 38 Oakridge Drive, Binghamton, NY 13903.

# NYS Election Reform: A Case Study in Stealth Amendments

In the closing week of this legislative session, a serious challenge faced the League of Women Voters and its partner organizations. It was rumored (based on recent lobbying efforts) that Microsoft and the voting machine vendors were seeking an amendment to the 2005 Election Law which would gut an important security piece of that law. Both the specific issue and the process offer a valuable civics lesson.

## The Issue

As originally passed, the law requires voting machine manufacturers to “place into escrow with the NYS Board of Elections a complete copy of all programming, source coding, and software employed by the voting machine, system, or equipment which shall be used exclusively for purposes authorized by this chapter and shall otherwise be confidential.” These would only be used if needed to settle challenges which might arise out of an election. Microsoft and the machine vendors claim that this material is proprietary and want that provision removed from the law.

## The Process

The problem with the Microsoft amendment is that it is not a separate bill with an identified number; it would come as a “stealth amendment,” popping up in any bill at any time until the deadline for submissions in late June.

How is that possible? Here is an eye-opening account from Barbara Bartoletti, our state League’s legislative director distributed by e-mail on June 19:

*“The way things work in this crazy last week of session is something to see. At the many committee meetings to approve bills, the chairperson does nothing but read off a long list of bill numbers. After each bill number, the chair quickly asks whether there are any negative votes, (of which there are rarely any), and then says “Reported,” meaning the bill has been approved. Rarely does*

*one actually see any debate about an actual bill, and many representatives might even vote on it without ever knowing there is dangerous language embedded in the bill. It is difficult for a spectator from the public to even get hold of the text of the bills being approved in this rapid fire fashion. Occasionally, the committee will provide the text of the bills in printed format outside the meeting room, but yesterday at least, at some of the committee meetings there were no printouts of the bills available. This leaves the public blind, and we need to rush off after the committee meeting to try to rustle up an actual printout of the bills they’ve just approved to see what’s in them.*

*One would expect that an amendment concerning New York’s source code escrow laws would appear in an Election Law bill, and, given our limited resources, it’s those bills that we’ve been monitoring the closest. So far as we know, as of Tuesday, 6/17, at 9 a.m., no amendment weakening source code provision has appeared. However, this can happen in any bill at any time! Yep, that’s right. The Microsoft amendment to our source code laws could appear in an education bill, or a health care bill, or something else that has nothing at all to do with elections. Given that about 75% of all the bills that the legislature will pass in the 2007 session are processed in this last week, it is a terribly difficult task for a small citizen advocacy group to monitor what’s going on. But this is what we have to do, and this is what I’m committed to doing all week here in Albany.*

*It sounds crazy, but that’s the way business is done in government today. So from now through the next Thursday, we are going to keep watching close, staying in the Capitol through all the late night sessions, and look at every bill that we can as it sees the light of day.”*

## The Outcome

We won—for now! No such amendment was offered. State League officials give the credit to the thousands of us who called our legislators. However, we know they deserve much of it as well!

~ Jane Park

# The Broome-Tioga Voter

## The League of Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties

P.O. Box 944  
Vestal, NY 13851-0944  
(607)772-4936

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION U.S. POSTAGE <b>PAID</b> BINGHAMTON, NY PERMIT #2
--

## Election Calendar 2007

### Primary Election – September 18, 2007

*Only voters enrolled in a political party may vote in that party's primary.*

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| August 24    | Last day to register to vote in person<br>Last day to postmark voter registration form        |
| August 29    | Last day for local Boards of Elections to receive notices of change of address                |
| September 11 | Last day to postmark application for absentee ballot  |
| September 17 | Last day to apply in person for an absentee ballot<br>Last day to postmark an absentee ballot |
| September 18 | Last day to deliver an absentee ballot in person to your county Board of Elections            |

### General Election – November 6, 2007

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| October 12 | Last day to register to vote in person<br>Last day to postmark voter registration form  |
| October 17 | Last day for local Boards of Elections to receive notices of change of address          |
| October 30 | Last day to postmark application for absentee ballot                                    |
| November 5 | Last day to apply in person for absentee ballot<br>Last day to postmark absentee ballot |
| November 6 | Last day to deliver absentee ballot in person to the Board of Elections                 |

For more information, call your county Board of Elections: 778-2172 (Broome) or 687-8261 (Tioga); or go [www.elections.state.ny.us/law/calendar](http://www.elections.state.ny.us/law/calendar). To access & print forms, go to the "Election Board" section of [www.gobroomecounty.com](http://www.gobroomecounty.com).