



# *LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY*

NOVEMBER 2009

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**GENERAL MEETING (GUESTS WELCOME): NOVEMBER 23, 7:00 PM**

**DRILLING FOR GAS IN THE MARCELLUS SHALE**

**William Kapell, Hydrologist with the USGS**

**Human Services Building, 520 W. State (MLK) St.  
(more information on page 2)**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

"Streamlining"...."grassroots"...."membership"...  
"effectiveness"

Some themes around these words seem to be turning up in various ways in League circles these days. How can the League's structure and processes be made more "user-friendly" and practical? The National League has in fact formed a "Streamlining the League" committee. At the June New York State League convention a desire to make things less cumbersome and to be more helpful to the local Leagues was apparent. Just one example since: NY State League regional directors have initiated quarterly teleconferences with their group of local presidents — a great way to give information and share ideas quite easily.

There is also recognition that the local Leagues — the grassroots membership — are the League's strength. Local Leagues are the foundation. A strong local program and local activities are what will be most likely to attract new members. Then, to take this to its logical next step, each local League member helps to make up that foundation. At various times some of us can take on more active roles — serving on the board, committees, etc. and I hope you

become involved as much as you are able (it's more fun that way!); but an important role, too, is helping in "one-shot" ways, coming to meetings and inviting other women and men to attend meetings with you and join the League as well.

Some of you may have ideas about how the League could be more efficient or more effective, how to attract new members and how you yourself might like to be more involved. We'd welcome ideas — let board members know about them. Thank you very much!

Marnie Johnson

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## **GAS DRILLING IN THE MARCELLUS SHALE**

Our newly re-formed Natural Resources Committee met on October 20. Much of the discussion focused on our concerns with regard to future drilling in the Marcellus Shale. Since this is a serious issue for New York State, our November 23 general meeting will give members and their friends a chance to learn more. A speaker will present some of the technical and non-technical information we need to understand. There will also be a film showing experiences people have had in other parts of the country where hydraulic fracturing has already been done. The speaker will be William Kappel from the USGS. He will discuss the nuts and bolts of the drilling process and answer questions we may have about the drilling. His talk will be followed by the movie, a brief summary of the wider concerns, and a time for questions plus discussion.

The League does not per se have a position with regard to drilling in the shale. It does, however, have long-standing positions on the preservation of our water supplies and our environment, issues of health and safety, strains on governmental agencies, and many other aspects of the proposed drilling project. For this reason, the League is studying the possible impacts of future drilling and is seeking to help educate the public on this important issue.

The type of drilling to be used poses potential health and safety problems and may change the nature of upstate New York from its current economic base of agriculture, tourism and education to one with a large physical and economic presence of the gas companies. The Natural Resources Committee would like to bring a few of our concerns to your attention:

1. The process of horizontal hydraulic fracturing and the chemical cocktails being used are quite new, having been developed in the late 1990s. The gas companies state that hydrofracking has been done for 50 years with no problems. They

fail to state that the older wells were vertical, not horizontal, and that much safer fluids were used. It is also not clear that the older techniques caused no contamination or other problems to the environment.

2. Safety of our water supplies is one major concern being studied. There are reports of spills and well contamination near drilling areas in Pennsylvania and other states. The drilling to be done in the Marcellus Shale is currently exempt from the Clean Air and Water Act. H.R. 2766, known as the Frac Act and sponsored by Rep. Hinchey and Rep. Massa, addresses this issue, but it has not yet come up for a vote in the House. There is a companion bill in the Senate, S. 1215. A recent resolution sponsored by Congressman Hinchey instructs the EPA to do a new review of hydraulic fracturing, since the review done by them in 2004 is considered to be highly flawed. It is expected that this resolution will be quickly passed in the senate and signed into law by President Obama.

3. It is expected that thousands of wells will be constructed in this part of New York State. Each well takes up several acres when completed. Holding ponds for the fluids removed from the wells take up an additional 5 acres each. Land will be cleared for all of these activities and there will be connecting roads plus pipelines permanently in place.

4. Tank trucks estimated at 125,000 pounds when full will make 200-500 trips each time a well is fracked, causing damage to roads and bridges.

5. Diesel run compressors will be used to pump the gas out of each well for the next 10-50 years. The 24/7 noise, air and light pollution produced will dramatically change the living environment on nearby properties and will pose additional health hazards. The economic impact on homeowners in the areas near the drill sites has not been considered. Air pollution from the compressors is believed to have led to serious health problems for residents and animals in the town of Dish, Texas.

6. The total carbon footprint of the gas extraction is high.

7. Companies doing the drilling are to a great extent international companies with no vested interest in our region. Many of them are not based in the U.S. and at least one has declared bankruptcy, leaving behind contaminated sites.
8. Local organic and non-organic farmers are quite concerned about possible contamination of water supplies and long-term air pollution.
9. Individuals and municipalities negatively affected by the drilling in other states have had little if any compensation for damage created so far. This could leave local taxpayers with large bills for any clean-up and repair that it is necessary to do. There is concern that local municipalities and their taxpayers will also be held responsible for the costs of monitoring well sites and water during the drilling process and the future decades of gas extraction. The recent suit brought against the city of Ithaca by First Energy concerning the cleanup of coal tar underscores our concerns about who will pay the costs of any future cleanup and repair resulting from gas drilling operations.
10. It is not clear how much of the gas extracted will stay in the U.S. to help the country solve its energy needs.

The DEC published its draft SGEIS report at the end of September. The comment period was restricted to 60 days for this complex and lengthy 800 page document. Rep. Barbara Lifton and various environmental groups requested that the period be lengthened to 120 to 180 days. On November 4 the governor extended the deadline to 90 days (the end of December), which is better but still not adequate. Preliminary feedback indicates that the report is weak and does not build in mandatory safeguards. The DEC is currently understaffed and cannot monitor the drilling activities without a large increase in the number of employees having the appropriate knowledge and skills.

It is important for us to understand the impact drilling in shale will have locally, throughout the state, and in many other parts of the country. We urge all of you to come and bring your

friends to our meeting on November 23. It will be held at 7p.m. in the Beverly Livesay Room of the Human Services Building on 320 West State Street. For parking enter on the Seneca Street Side of the building. If you are interested in joining our Natural Resources Committee or have questions about it call Kay Wagner at 539-3322.

Kay Wagner

#### **INTERNET RESOURCES**

CCE Natural Gas Devel. Resource Center:  
**[gasleasing.cce.cornell.edu](http://gasleasing.cce.cornell.edu)**

NYS Water Resources Institute  
**[wri.eas.cornell.edu](http://wri.eas.cornell.edu)**

Shaleshock Citizens Action Coalition  
**[www.shaleshock.org](http://www.shaleshock.org)**

DEC Website & Link to the SGEIS  
**[www.dec.ny.gov/energy/46288.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/46288.html)**

#### **STATE CONSOLIDATION & SHARED SERVICES STUDY**

The timetable and suggested readings for the new state study of local government consolidation and shared services are available on the state website, <http://www.lwvny.org>. Consensus questions will be available in January for study until April. The state study chair recommends that we start reading the material on the internet to get up to speed as soon as possible.

If you are interested in participating in the consensus process, come to our organizational meeting on Tuesday, December 1st, at 12:00 noon at Kendal. Lunch will be available in the cafeteria. For information, contact Alene Wyatt at 257-1894 or [alene@lightlink.com](mailto:alene@lightlink.com)

Alene Wyatt

## E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Both the US and NYS Leagues have moved most of their communication from snail mail to Internet and e-mail. Although none of us wants to encourage more e-mail traffic than necessary, e-mail will soon be essential in order to remain connected with the activities of the League. The following is from an informational letter from the LWV-NY to local League presidents:

“We will be sending the "New York State Voter" via email to all of our members starting in November. In order to do this, it is necessary that your members' email addresses are in the National Database and updated whenever necessary. Procedures are also being developed to make paper copies available of the NYS Voter at a small cost to those who request it; watch for more information on this option.”

“This need not be a painstaking task--- members can update their own League contact information, and encouraging them to do so will take the burden off of the database administrator. Individual members can log into the National Database (<https://member.lwv.org/Login.asp>) and click ‘Manage Your Account’ on the left hand side to enter or update their e-mail addresses. Many

members need to get the message that this option is available to them.

“National was asked if and how they use member e-mail addresses and this is their response: ‘Yes, we do use them - but prudently - we NEVER sell them to anyone else. With general members we only use them to send the monthly E-Voice, they get an "E-Engagement" piece about once a month and for those that have signed up they get action alerts to help lobby Congress as necessary.’”

We urge you to enter your e-mail into the National database if it has not already been done. If you prefer, send your request to [rhs1@cornell.edu](mailto:rhs1@cornell.edu) and we can easily do it for you. Neither is necessary if you have already provided us with your e-address or if you are receiving this bulletin via e-mail.

Bob Silsbee

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## REQUEST FROM MEMBERSHIP

Please bring a friend to the Nov. 23 League meeting. It will be an interesting and timely opportunity to learn more about the issues of gas drilling and to become acquainted with the League.

### LWV-TC CALENDAR—2009-2010

*tentative dates and programs in italics*

<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Nov 23</b>	<b>GAS DRILLING IN THE MARCELLUS SHALE</b>	<b>Hum. Serv. Bldg.</b>
9:30	Sat	Dec 5	Board Meeting	Maria Eisner
7:00	Mon	Jan 4	Board Meeting	Old Jail
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b><i>Jan 25</i></b>		
7:00	Mon	Feb 8	Board Meeting	Old Jail
<b>noon</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b><i>Feb 20</i></b>	<b><i>Information Meeting on Consolidation &amp; Shared Services</i></b>	
7:00	Mon	Mar 8	Board Meeting	Old Jail
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b><i>Mar 22</i></b>	<b><i>League's 90th Anniversary</i></b>	
7:00	Mon	Apr 5	Board Meeting	Bob Silsbee
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b><i>Apr 26</i></b>	<b><i>Consensus meeting on Consolidation &amp; Shared Services</i></b>	
7:00	Mon	May 3	Board Meeting	
	<b>Mon</b>	<b><i>May 10</i></b>	<b><i>Annual Meeting</i></b>	
7:00	Mon	June 7	Board Meeting	Kathy Burlitch

## CITY FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS: DINNER & DISCUSSION

Representatives from the federation member organizations met on October 28, 2009, at the Women's Community Building, to discuss the future direction of the organization and brainstorm what organizational structure would best fulfill the City Federation of Women's Organizations (CFWO) mission when the Women's Community Building is sold. Marnie Johnson and Libby deProse attended as representatives of the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County.

A range of organizational structures were suggested to stimulate discussion and included:

- a "legacy" board structure with one voting representative for each CFWO organization and at large community members
- a foundation board made up of representatives from diverse community not-for-profit organizations and groups/clubs
- an independent foundation board representing diverse constituencies and demographics
- a CFWO designated fund established with the Community Foundation of Tompkins County; and dissolution of the CFWO

Issues discussed included:

- honoring the history, collective vision, and mission of the CFWO
- determining the organizational structure that will best continue in perpetuity the mission of the CFWO to meet the needs of women and children in Tompkins County.
- transitioning from landowner to foundation and addressing the needs of the federation members and tenants (e.g. the issue of a community space)
- maintaining the identity of the CFWO and involving the community in its mission
- expanding board membership
- developing criteria for board membership and term limits
- preserving and increasing the endowment
- use of funds are governed by the following three broad constraints:

- \* any money distributed cannot extend beyond the purpose and mission of the CFWO
- \* any money distributed must not conflict with the CFWO Certificate of Incorporation
- \* any giving must be in keeping with the IRS qualification as a tax-exempt 501(c)3

Kathleen Yen, Secretary

## TO CITY OF ITHACA VOTERS (WHO ACTUALLY VOTED)

The LWV-NY is surveying experiences of members who had the opportunity to vote on Tuesday with the new experimental system involving optical scanning. This note comes from them.

“We recently sent out a survey to members for whom we had email addresses asking for their experiences using the new voting machines. We have received requests to include the survey in local bulletins, for those members whose email addresses we did not have. The link to the survey is:

**<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07e2m48k2cg1avygtv/start>**

Members may access and complete the survey through this link.

“Also, for those without email, I have listed below the questions on the survey. Members may either email or send us their responses by regular mail.”

### I. Identifying Information:

(name, address, email address, county, polling place, local League)

### II. Questions on Voting:

1. Were you given adequate instructions on how to use the new voting machines by the poll workers? (yes/no) If no, please explain.
2. Did the privacy booth give you adequate space and privacy? (yes/no) If no, please explain.
3. Were the instructions on how to complete the ballot easy to understand and in large enough print? (yes/no) If no, please explain.

4. Did you have difficulty in filling out the ballot? (yes/no) If yes, please explain.

specific, on the machine, the process or the poll workers.

### III. Questions on Scanning your Ballot:

1. Was a privacy sleeve provided for your ballot? (yes/no)
2. Did you use the privacy sleeve? (yes/no) Please explain if necessary.
3. If a poll worker handled your ballot, did they use the privacy sleeve? (yes/no) Please explain if necessary.
4. Did you have any problem putting your ballot in the scanner? (yes/no) If yes, please explain.
5. While you were in the polling place, did you observe how rejected ballots were handled by poll workers? (yes/no) If yes, please explain.
6. Were there any delays or lines of more than five voters waiting to scan their ballots? (yes/no) Please explain if necessary.

### V. Ballot Marking Devices:

1. Was the Ballot Marking Device well located in the polling place to protect the voter's privacy? Was a poll inspector assigned to assist the voter using it?
2. Did you observe any voters using the Ballot Marking Device and having any problems? If you are able, describe the problem.

“While the survey tool appears to have worked well, we have decided to offer access to the survey to all members in the participating counties as requested by some of the local Leagues. Results from the survey are available when you complete the survey online and we will be reporting on the final results in the near future to all League members.”

IV. Please provide your comments, general or

LWV-NY

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2009-10

LWV NYS website  
LWV US website  
LWV-Tompkins County

leave message at 273-1436

[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)  
[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)  
[lwvtc@twcny.rr.com](mailto:lwvtc@twcny.rr.com)  
[lwvtompkins.org/](http://lwvtompkins.org/)

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President	Marnie Johnson	257-2948	
V.P. Program	Florence Smith	273-6147	<a href="mailto:FloSmith42@aol.com">FloSmith42@aol.com</a>
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Secretary	Kathleen Yen	257-8199	<a href="mailto:kyen@twcny.rr.com">kyen@twcny.rr.com</a>
Treasurer	Bo Lipari	387-9308	<a href="mailto:bolipari@nyvv.org">bolipari@nyvv.org</a>

### Directors:

Bulletin	Robert Silsbee	273-1436	<a href="mailto:rhs1@cornell.edu">rhs1@cornell.edu</a>
Director-at-large	Libby deProsse	257-6678	<a href="mailto:deprosse@lightlink.com">deprosse@lightlink.com</a>
Publications/Public Relations	Kathy Burlitch	539-7316	<a href="mailto:klburlitch@frontiernet.net">klburlitch@frontiernet.net</a>
Web	Linda Duttweiler	277-0006	<a href="mailto:ldutt@twcny.rr.com">ldutt@twcny.rr.com</a>
Co-Voter Services	Debbie Levin	273-7746	<a href="mailto:dlevin01@twcny.rr.com">dlevin01@twcny.rr.com</a>
Co-Voter Services	Sally Grubb	257-6017	<a href="mailto:sally.grubb@gmail.com">sally.grubb@gmail.com</a>
Co-Membership	Lucia Armstrong	257-2748	<a href="mailto:larmstro@twcny.rr.com">larmstro@twcny.rr.com</a>

### Off-Board Members:

Webmaster	Michael Duttweiler	277-0006	<a href="mailto:mduttweiler@twcny.rr.com">mduttweiler@twcny.rr.com</a>
Health Care—Chair	Rebecca Elgie	272-0621	<a href="mailto:healthylink@earthlink.net">healthylink@earthlink.net</a>
Natural Resources—Chair	Kay Wagner	539-3322	<a href="mailto:cwm18@cornell.edu">cwm18@cornell.edu</a>
NYS Consolidation/Shared Services —Chair	Alene Wyatt	257-1894	<a href="mailto:alene@lightlink.com">alene@lightlink.com</a>

**VOTER SERVICES REPORT**

A candidate forum, co-sponsored by the Dryden Grange and our League, was held at the Dryden Firehouse on Oct. 22. We provided a Moderator (Debbie Levin) and a Timer (Kathy Burlich). The panel consisted of Michael Lane, Michael Sigler, James Crawford, Jason Leifer, Steven Stelick and Deb Shigley. The meeting was very well attended with about 60 people in the audience. The hot topic was gas drilling with several members of the audience seeming concerned and asking questions about it.

A second candidate forum for contested seats for the County Legislature was held on Oct. 29 at the Town of Ithaca Town Hall. The moderator was Diane Conneman with Libby DeProsse acting as timer. Sally Grubb helped with the arrangements, assisted at the meeting, and provided a sound system and refreshments. The panel consisted of Patricia Pryor and Michael Sigler, District 6; David M. McKenna and Dennis Hartley, District 8; A. Damon Ferguson, District 9 (Brian P. Robison was unable to attend); and Michael E. Lane and James H. Crawford, District 14. The audience was unfortunately very small and primarily composed of family members and friends of the candidates. However two Ithaca College Journalism Students were there working on a class assignment. Other members of the County Legislature running for uncontested seats also attended and made brief comments.

Despite the poor turnout, the presentations made by panelists gave good insight into the views and platforms of the candidates and questions elicited some interesting answers. The level of County taxation and how to handle this was the major topic of discussion.

Debbie Levin

**RURAL HEALTH CARE: WHERE THE NEEDS ARE GREAT AND THE RESOURCES ARE FEW**

*By Doris Isolini Nelson*

The inadequacy of our fragmented, uncoordinated health care system is particularly acute in the rural areas of the United States. The National Rural Health Association notes in *Health Reform Priorities for Rural America*<sup>1</sup> that health reform that expands health insurance coverage is necessary – rural Americans are both more uninsured and underinsured than urban Americans – *but the greater crisis is the lack of access to health care. Coverage does not equal access.*

**Lack of Primary Care Doctors and Specialists**

	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
• Percentage of primary care doctors	10%	90%
• Number of specialists per 100,000 population	40	134

**Lack of Mental Health Services**

- 20 percent of rural counties lack mental health services versus 5 percent of metropolitan counties.
- In 1999, 87 percent of the 1,669 areas in the U.S. designated as Mental Health Professional Service Areas were in rural counties.
- The suicide rate among rural men and children is significantly higher than in urban areas.<sup>2</sup>

### **Lack of Women's Access to Health Services**

According to Rural/Frontier Women's Access to Health Services,<sup>3</sup> "All women in rural and frontier areas are affected by the lack of primary and specialty care. In addition, the lack of specialty care has a particular impact on women of child-bearing age and those having gynecological problems. The lack of oral care puts rural women at an increased risk for periodontal disease, which has been linked as a factor contributing to pre-term birth."

The lack of preventive care makes it difficult to access reproductive services and preventive screenings, such as Pap tests and mammograms. When women do receive abnormal test results, they face difficulties following the prescribed treatment plan.

- With reduced access to health services, rural women delay prenatal care or receive none at all. Latina women in rural areas are at the highest risk for receiving inadequate prenatal care.
- Family physicians remain a crucial component of the provision of rural obstetric care, but the increase in medical malpractice costs has led many providers and local hospitals to discontinue obstetrical services.
- Adverse perinatal outcomes and infant mortality are especially high in rural communities in the South and West.
- Family planning services: Access has been linked to a decrease in unplanned pregnancies, fewer infants born with low birth-weights, fewer infant and neonatal deaths and fewer abortions. Although community health centers are required to provide family planning services, a 1997 study found that only 60 percent actually provided the services.
- The rural South has the highest rates of teenage births.
- Services for older women: Rural areas lack many social and health services provided by primary care physicians

training in gerontology and geriatrics. The economic conditions in many communities often results in their being unable to fund adult day care, respite care or "Meals on Wheels."

- Mental health services: Barriers to women accessing mental health care services include geographical distances, lack of transportation, cost of services, lack of insurance and shortage of providers. Rural women in western states commit suicide at a rate three times more than women living in urban areas.

### **Health Information Technology Policy and Rural Hospitals<sup>4</sup>**

"Clinical errors result in at least 44,000 deaths and direct medical costs of \$18 billion annually, imposing a substantial burden on the health care system and society as a whole. Technologies such as electronic medical records, computerized physician order entry, and electronic medication administration records are designed to reduce opportunities for miscommunication among health care professionals." Electronic records may also provide effective communication between doctors and patients.

In 2005, a report by the Institute of Medicine on the Future of Rural Health emphasized the importance of health information technology (HIT) for improving the quality and safety of health care. The report also listed the challenges many rural communities face in adopting HIT:

- Financial constraints and limited access to capital
- Inadequate infrastructure
- Limited HIT workforce support

According to a study of HIT applications, rural hospitals in general and Critical Access Hospitals in particular, continue to lag behind urban hospitals in HIT adoption.

## Implications for Reform

“The obstacles faced by health care providers and patients in rural areas are vastly different than those in urban areas. Rural Americans face a unique combination of factors that create disparities in health care ... Economic factors, cultural and social differences, educational shortcomings, lack of recognition by legislators and the sheer isolation of living in remote rural areas all conspire to impede rural Americans in their struggle to lead a normal healthy life.”<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, the health care crisis in rural America calls for a multi-faceted solution to the complex problem of delivering health care.

- Eliminate professional workforce shortages
- Improve and expand the National Health Service Corps. The National Health Service Corps was created in the 1970s because many rural physicians retired or moved during the 1950s and 1960s, leaving many areas in the country without essential health services. Increasing specialization and technological advances fed the trend.<sup>5</sup>
- Through scholarship and loan repayment programs, the Corps helps designated shortage areas get medical, dental and mental health providers.<sup>6</sup> As of March 31, 2009, there are thousands of designated “Professional Shortage Areas” in primary, dental and mental health practitioners in the United States.<sup>7</sup>
- Create incentives for rural medicine<sup>1</sup>
- Increase the cap on the cost of rural residency training programs in primary care and general surgery and provide appropriate funding for faculty to train additional residents in these areas.
- Create incentives for primary care: provide interest-free loans and tax credits on income for primary care and general surgery residencies in rural and underserved areas.

- Provide equity in reimbursement
- “Medicare payments to rural hospitals and physicians are dramatically less than those to their urban counterparts for equivalent services.”<sup>2</sup>
- Correct disparities in infrastructure<sup>4</sup>
- This is particularly important in the development of HIT within hospitals and among providers. Electronic medical records can also assist primary care doctors consulting with specialists who are geographically separated from the care of their patients.

Providing for the health care needs of rural Americans will require more than universal insurance coverage. Access to care will require the coordination and financial support of:

- Medical training programs targeted to rural needs
- Incentives for primary care practitioners in isolated communities
- Development of community health centers that provide both health education and services
- Financing of appropriate HIT and staff.<sup>1,2,5,6,7</sup>

1 <http://www.ruralhealthweb.org/go/left/health-reform-and-advocacy/health-reform/health-reform-advocacy-toolkit/rural-reform-priorities>

2 <http://www.ruralhealthweb.org/go/left/about-rural-health/what-s-different-about-rural-health-care>

3 <http://www.nrharural.org/go/rural-health-topics/frontier/>

4 [http://www.uppermidwestrhc.org/pdf/policybrief\\_hit\\_policy.pdf](http://www.uppermidwestrhc.org/pdf/policybrief_hit_policy.pdf)

5 <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/>

6 <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/about/history.htm>

7 <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/about/>

*Doris Isolini Nelson (LWVCA) is a member of the LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force.*

## YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS

## SENATORS:

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