



THE HUNTINGTON VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF
SUFFOLK COUNTY AND HUNTINGTON

P. O. Box 20693

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April-May 2007
Katherine Hoak & Marcy Emerson, Co-Editors

Arlene Forward,
President



Jo-Ann Raia, Town Clerk and Registrar, has invited the LWV of Huntington to a tour of the Town of Huntington Archives on Wednesday, April 18, from 10 AM to 2 PM.

This is a most interesting tour, one in which several of us participated several years ago.

It is suggested that we bring our lunch.

Please let us know if you plan to attend by contacting Linda Lessing at: BarneyLessing@msn.com or LWV phone: (631) 421-5164

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our President, Arlene Forward, is on a medical leave of absence. Marilyn Brown and Rosemarie Sepanski, our former Co-Presidents, have agreed to take on some of the presidential responsibilities in Arlene's absence. She is sorely missed!

As you read this issue of our Voter, our League is involved in many interesting activities. Members have been meeting with both County and State legislators to discuss our positions on various issues, such as redistricting, election reform, campaign finance reform, and the environment. Others attend meetings as our representatives of the Town Board, the Huntington Township Housing Coalition, and other community organizations. We recently joined with the LWVSC to hear a presentation by the Office Chief of the US Geological Survey on "Understanding Long Island's Water Supply."

There are always varied opportunities for members of the LWV of Huntington to learn, join in stimulating discussions with others, and become involved with issues important to the lives of citizens and our communities. We hope to see you at some of our meetings!
Marilyn Brown

Membership

We are planning to hold a presentation for new and prospective members in late April. Current members will also be invited, especially because it will be a good refresher course for all of us.

If you have any friends or neighbors that may be interested in attending, please tell them about the meeting and come along with them! There will be a special notice about the date, time and place. Members will be notified by either e-mail or snail mail.

Irene Ferrand
Tel. 367-3041

Upcoming Meetings

Board Meeting April 5, 1:30 PM
Judie Gorenstein, 491-3177

Board Meeting May 3, 1:30 PM
Marilyn Brown, 667-8911

Annual Meeting June 7, 7:00 PM
Speaker: Anita Katz, BOE
Commissioner

VOTER SERVICES REPORT

By Judie Gorenstein
Voter Chair

Do you remember how you felt when you could not vote at 18 years old? Do you remember how happy you were when the 26th amendment was passed in 1970? Are you surprised and dismayed that the youngest eligible voters have the lowest voter turnout now?

Our voter service committee, which is always looking for ways to educate and encourage participation in government, is trying to motivate our young. Since January, we have been working energetically to bring a new program, "Vote18", into our schools. This is an interactive lesson developed by Walt Townes. More than providing students with the history of voting rights in this country, it allows them to FEEL the anger when that right is not theirs or has been taken away.

This lesson plan has been used in New York City and also by the Hamptons League. Most recently, our committee was able to arrange for Walt Townes to bring this program to an undergraduate class at Post University. Judie Gorenstein, Diane Slavin, and Marcia Robbins participated and believe the lesson was very well received. The students all stated that they would DEFINITELY vote in the next election. In fact, one student who was not registered asked for and completed the voter registration form right there.

I not only want to thank Judi Roth from the Hamptons League for sending us the "Vote 18" DVD and introducing us to Walt Townes, but want to encourage any of our members who have contacts with Social Studies teachers or administrators to help us get this program into our schools. You can see a brief version of this lesson on Walt Townes website at www.VOTE18.ORG. If you have any questions, call Judie Gorenstein at 491-3177.

You are all invited and encouraged to join the Voter Service Committee. The next meeting is scheduled at Judie's house on April 12 at 1 PM. Democracy is not a spectator sport!

A LESSON PLAN FOR THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE – AND ALL OF US

By Judi Roth
Education Chair, LWV of the Hamptons

The Nov. 24, 2006 issue of "Science," the most prestigious refereed journal in the wide field of "science," has published a book review, "*Learning to Become a 'Good' Citizen*," (Blais, A., Science, 314:1244-45, Nov. 24, 2006), that is of particular interest to the LWV. "*Why We Vote: How Schools and Communities Shape Our Civic Life*" by David E. Campbell (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 2006) should be mandatory reading for all people who bemoan low voter turnout; it may provide a roadmap on how we can do better and where we should expend our energies.

The main theme of Campbell's book is that an internalized sense of civic duty is a key factor in motivating people to vote and that this sense of duty flourishes best in homogeneous communities with strong civic norms. Campbell, who is a political scientist at the University of Notre Dame, proposes two theories as to why people become publicly involved: 1) to fulfill a sense of duty, or 2) to protect their interests. These motivations are not mutually exclusive and can exist in the same person. The decision to vote, Campbell says, is based more on a sense of duty. A sense of duty dominates in civic forms of engagement such as volunteering, whereas interest is more dominant in activities such as protest or partisan work, as well as joining and working for a political party.

Campbell has done extensive analysis to support his dual-motivation theory. According to Blais' review, his empirical tests and controls are impeccable. What he does even better is to show the linkages between his results and how these can be turned into practical plans.

Here are some of his findings:

- a) People are more likely to vote in both the most politically homogenous and the most heterogeneous communities. In the former, it is because of their sense of duty; and in the latter, it is because of greater competition.
- b) Volunteerism is greatest in more homogenous communities; the need to

A Lesson Plan (Continued from previous)

- c) protect one's interests through protest and electoral activism are found in more heterogeneous communities.
- d) People with more politically homogenous social networks are more inclined to vote.
- e) Adolescents who live in more homogenous counties are more likely to do volunteer work.
- f) Adolescents who volunteer are more inclined to vote when they become adults.
- g) The strengths of civic duty within one's high school; i.e., the belief that voting makes you a good citizen increases the probability that one will vote 15 years later.

Campbell argues that a citizen's moral obligation to vote is usually ingrained before adulthood, and duty is the predominant consideration in voting while personal interest falls to the sidelines. He shows that, everything else being equal, the probability of voting in 1980 was 10 percentage points higher for someone whose high school civic climate was strongest in 1965 than for someone whose high school civic climate was weakest. This impact (high school civic climate) is of the same magnitude as the effects of parental education and parental political involvement.

In summary, "*Why We Vote*" makes us think about the role of schools in society. Campbell shows that schools matter very much; and although it may not be clear what should be done (and can be done) to foster the development of civic duties in schools, we must work on and think about the aspects of the school system that help or hinder the attainment of such civic norms.

HUNTINGTON SYMPOSIUM

It was previously reported that Supervisor Petrone suggested that the Town sponsor three symposiums addressing the quality of life in Huntington, with the League's co-sponsorship. It has since been determined that affordable housing should be the focus of one major symposium in the fall. A steering committee with Marilyn Brown, Judie Gorenstein, Libby Hubbard, Linda

Lessing, and JoAnn McCarthy will meet monthly with Town officials Joan Cergol and Doug Aloise, and members of the Housing Coalition Ken Christenson and Reba Siniscalchi, to plan the symposium.

We are being encouraged to "think outside the box." How can we increase affordable housing so that young and old can remain in Huntington? How can we, at the same time, protect the environment and dispose of sewage and waste? These are difficult questions which need solutions. We cannot afford not to have affordable housing.

UNDERSTANDING LONG ISLAND'S WATER SUPPLY: USGS PRESENTATION

By Katherine Hoak

On Thursday, March 15th, eight Huntington League members attended this presentation by Stephen Terracciano, Office Chief of the United States Geological Survey, at the Riverhead Library. The USGS is the nation's largest water, earth, and biological science and civilian mapping agency. It collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides scientific understanding about natural resource conditions, issues, and problems. We were particularly interested because of the dispute surrounding the proposed drilling by the SC Water Authority into the Lloyd Aquifer in Northport. Apparently, not much research has been done on the aquifers along Long Island's North Shore; therefore, relatively little is known about them. It seemed to us that drilling into the Lloyd was quite problematic. What is very much needed is commitment by SC's governments to finance such research.

After the meeting, we went for lunch at Tweed's, a restaurant on Riverhead's Main Street. Tweed's is the proud owner of the head of a bison shot by Teddy Roosevelt! The food was quite delicious, and we had a lovely time together.

HUNTINGTON TOWN HALL MEETINGS

By JoAnn McCarthy

Huntington Town Hall Liaison

January 16th The meeting started with recognition of people and organizations who performed community service during 2006, including the Bulldog football teams and Cameron Ocasio, a 7 year-old who won a black belt in Karate.

Councilman Stuart Besen made amendments (Child Protection Act, Zoning), which were reserved. Proposed regulations would ban the highest risk Level 2 & 3 sex offenders from owning or living in accessory apartments in Town. Any landlord who intentionally rents to such offenders will be subject to criminal penalty under the Town of Huntington Code. Offenders would be restricted from coming within ¼ mile of schools, day camps, daycare centers, and parks. Mr. Besen also presented a map showing where all registered sex offenders reside, using the State's sex offender registry.

The Resolutions on the Agenda were accepted unanimously by the Town Board.

February 6th The Town Board unanimously approved amendments to the Town's zoning code that would keep registered Level 2 & 3 sex offenders from areas where children congregate. A map will be posted on the Town's web site to show where these sex offenders live.

The Board extended the moratorium imposed last year on private golf courses for another six months. Whether to allow

them to be developed or to remain as golf courses is under review.

The Town Board authorized the following:

- 1) The Supervisor to execute the NYS Public Service Joint Proposal for LIPA's application for a certificate of environmental compatibility and need regarding replacement of the 138kV submarine electric transmission line between Northport, NY and Norwalk, CT.
- 2) The retention of outside counsel to oppose Broadwater Energy, LLC and Broadwater Pipeline, LLC.
- 3) The Supervisor to execute and file a supplemental agreement to amend the completion date for the implementation of the NYS Coastal Resources Interpretive Program (NYSCRIP) for Huntington's Waterfront Contract C006431.

March 6th This session deliberated on issues which impact on neighborhoods, open space and housing. The Board authorized the Supervisor to apply for funding from the Suffolk County Workforce Program to implement a Take Back the Blocks Pilot Program. It also authorized the Comptroller to appropriate monies from the environmental Open Space and Park Improvement Fund for recommended Neighborhood Enhancement (Huntington Station Streetscaping).

Peggy Boyd and Sophia Hall were appointed to the Affordable Housing Advisory Board with terms that expire December 31, 2009.

Huntington Town Hall Meetings (Contd.)

To streamline communication between residents and the Town, the board authorized the supervisor to apply for a Federal grant to create a 311-Townstat System. Also, grant applications will be submitted for Federal funding for transit operation of HART, and the Supervisor is authorized to obtain operating assistance for HART from Suffolk County.

The Movies on the Lawn Series will have showings at four locations this summer, and the LI Growers Market will again operate on Sunday mornings in the Elm Street Municipal lot.



ISLIP TOWN BOARD MEETINGS

By Katherine Hoak

The LWV of Huntington was contacted for its input on the ethics reform proposal made by Supervisor Phil Nolan (Democrat) at the Islip Town Board meeting of February 27th. Because of some criminal activity and accusations of Islip Town officials throughout 2006, officials have been pushed to revise the Town's ethics code. As co-president of the LWVSC and

resident of Islip, I spoke in support of immediate ethics reform. I was quoted in *Suffolk Life* (March 7, 2007):

“As a resident of Islip, I have been left with strong concerns about our town government as a whole, in light of the misconduct of town officials revealed recently, and wonder who it is government officials are truly looking out for. Islip citizens need to know that their government is looking out for their welfare. This is not a partisan issue, either. Ethical behavior on the part of government officials applies equally to Democrats and Republicans and other parties, as well.”

There was almost no opposition to the ethics reform from the public, but the Town Council (4 Republicans) nevertheless tabled it, saying that it had formed an ethics reform board in March 2006. That board was to get back to the Supervisor and Council shortly.

At the next Board meeting, though, on March 13th, the ethics amendments were again at Public Hearing. There were strong public statements made in support of it. The Council, though, said that the ethics board, composed of experts, would get back to them by March 16th. Mr. Nolan, before the vote, stated that he formed his ethics amendments from the NYS ethics recommendations made to towns and municipalities; and the LWV, a respected organization, supported his ethics reform. The Council, however, tabled the reform again. The next Town Board meeting will be on April 10th.

Suffolk County Voter

April 2007

www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org

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Thurs. April 19, 2007 LWVSC Board Meeting, 10:00am—Riverhead Library
Thurs.. May 10, 2007 LWVSC Annual Convention, approx 4:30-7:30pm
Location and further details will be announced

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LWVSC VISITS BD OF ELECTIONS

On March 7, 2007, members from the LWV of Suffolk County met with Commissioner Anita Katz and newly appointed Commissioner Cathy Geier as well as her staff. At this time no one is certain when or which voting machines will replace our levers. In fact, we can not be certain who will ultimately be making the choice. The LWV is advocating strongly for a single statewide optical scan voting system and supports Assembly Bill #A05170 sponsored by Assemblyman Galef and cosponsored by some of our own legislators: Ginny Fields, Fred Thiele, Jr., and also James Conte and Steven Engelbright. The commissioners were skeptical that this bill would pass as two years ago legislators had abdicated and left the decision to the counties. However, we should all be thanking our legislators who support this bill as well as advocating for our other legislators as well as state senators and Governor Spitzer to support a single statewide optical scan system so that we can be certain our votes are counted and counted correctly.

We also need to begin lobbying for unrestricted absentee balloting. According to Aimee Allaud, the LWVNYS has supported this since the early 1990's when members testified extensively in a series of hearings. Now that everyone is certain and concerned that whenever the change of voting machines occurs, there will be some confusion at polling sites and resistance from some voters, it seems an excellent time to lobby for unrestricted absentee ballots. Thirty states now allow anybody to cast an absentee ballot whereas six years ago it was only twenty. In New York under current law, only voters who are physically impaired, under a doctor's care, and unable to get to the polls or those persons who are not in the county on Election Day due to business or vacation can vote on an absentee ballot. Even with the extended hours for voting, this presents a hardship for voters who may live in

one end of the county and work on the other or even for some people on the east end who work in the city. These voters are often faced with the dilemma of not voting or not being truthful when applying for an absentee ballot. Both Commissioner Katz and Commissioner Geier favor easing restrictions for absentee voting.

They both also reminded us of another very important role that LWV members could fulfill; ie, poll inspectors. Change of any kind meets resistance. Not only will voters be skeptical but it is anticipated that poll workers and inspectors will also be and it is assumed many will quit. Who would be able to better fulfill the job of inspector than League members? Not only will we be able to provide a concrete service on Election Day, but it will provide us with first hand knowledge of what else needs to be done to keep making improvements and help elections run smoothly. New York has been slow to decide which machines we will use and this has been beneficial as it has resulted in us not making the mistakes of others. However, let our members NOT delay in getting involved. We have so much we can do to help our BOE. Let's do it!

Judie Gorenstein

Katherine Hoak & Lisa Scott working the LWV table at Touro Law School on Mar.14.

SC FORENSIC MENTAL HYGIENE HOUSING PROGRAM (FMHHP)

League members are currently meeting with our State Senators and Assembly Members to present this program which will divert people with mental illness and/or co-occurring substance abuse disorders from the SC Correctional Facility into safe and supportive housing, a cost-effective alternative to jail, while reducing the risk of recidivism for offenders with mental illness. This proposed program model is supported by Community Mental Hygiene, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), District Court, Probation Department, and the Coalition of Mental Health Service Providers.

Suffolk County is unique because of the three psychiatric centers which had housed nearly 33,000 people, and at their peak, about one-third of all institutionalized patients in the State. Now only Pilgrim Psychiatric Center remains open with approximately 600 patients. Reinvestment funding was an attempt by the State to foster continued downsizing of psychiatric institutions by linking funding to counties for the development of community mental health resources. However, most of the funds were attached to a statewide pool of funds allocated to all counties, rather than to the specific localities actually affected by the reduction in State psychiatric facility beds. Suffolk County, therefore, never received the funding that matches the demand and service needs of individuals who were de-institutionalized. The impact of inadequate State funding has been profound.

In any given year, an average of 6,000 people with serious mental illness are involved with Suffolk County's criminal justice system. Several polls show that approximately 20 percent of the inmates in our jails (and 10 percent of probationers) have serious and persistent mental illness. Many of these people, when not jailed, are homeless, unemployed, undereducated, and lacking in daily living skills. They normally do not receive adequate treatment for their mental illness. When they are

jailed, it costs the County \$230 a day for each, or over \$74,000 annually!

Because the County's mental health systems are so overburdened and underfunded, and because there are a minimum number of safe, supportive housing units available to them, individuals with mental illness, often with co-occurring substance abuse disorders, seek housing in unlicensed, unregulated, and unsafe sober homes, DSS emergency housing, or end up homeless. Often they become victims wherever they are.

Given these current conditions, people with mental illness lose their ability to function; they repeat the very behaviors that put them at risk of incarceration in the first place.

FMHHP will provide supervised community residence and supported housing to these individuals, who would be able to move into supported housing to provide a cost-effective alternative to jail, while reducing the risk of recidivism for these non-violent offenders with mental illness. This program will strengthen participants' social functioning through peer support groups, reduce substance abuse, improve overall mental health and employability and link participants with supportive services upon release from this program.

The purpose of our interviews with State legislators is to ask them to work with the Governor's Office, the Division of Budget, and the Office of Mental Health to ensure that the Governor's proposed mental health housing expansion is incorporated in the final budget and to ensure that funding is made available specifically for Suffolk County to fund this proposal. We did attend the Budget Public Hearing presented by Republican Assembly members on March 2nd. Because of time constraints, though, we were unable to speak, but left a copy of the FMHHP program and the presentation on it we planned to make for each of the Assembly Members.

Katherine Hoak

SUFFOLK COUNTY REPUBLICAN WOMEN

We were invited by Fran Brechter, President of the Suffolk County Republican Women, to join them at their first General Membership Meeting of 2007 at the Islip GOP Headquarters on March 7th to talk about the League and some of our activities and goals. Members of the Babylon, Brookhaven, Huntington and Islip GOP Clubs were present. Their primary goals were to increase their membership and to encourage more women to become involved in the political process. They wanted information and education from us.

We gave an overview of the League's mission to educate and motivate citizen participation, our Voter Service activities, and the primary positions (Affordable Housing, Alternatives to Incarceration, focusing on services for mentally ill people who become involved with the criminal justice system, Redistricting, Campaign Finance Reform, and Environmental Concerns, specifically the Lloyd Aquifer) which we work on.

We received a warm response and met many women who share our concerns and involvements. It was a rewarding evening!