



# THE HUNTINGTON VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HUNTINGTON

P. O. Box 20693

Huntington Station, NY 11746

(631) 421-5164

February - March 2010

Katherine Hoak & Marcy Emerson, Co-Editors

Judie Gorenstein, President

## **SUPREME COURT DECISION STIRS CONTROVERSY**

A bitterly divided Supreme Court on Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, ruled that the government may not ban political spending by corporations in candidate elections. The majority in the 5-4 decision said that government had no business regulating political speech. The dissenters said that allowing corporate money to flood the political marketplace would corrupt democracy.

Mary G. Wilson, national president of the League of Women Voters (the League had filed an amicus brief on the Supreme Court's decision in regard to Citizens United v. FEC), said that the Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake, one that is constitutionally irresponsible and which will bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. She said that basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined.

President Obama called it "a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans." Justice Paul Stevens wrote the dissent, saying that the majority of the justices had made a grave error in treating corporate speech the same as that of human beings.

Additionally, Justice Stevens, in writing for the minority (Justices Breyer, Ginsburg, and Sotomayor) said: "In creating a new constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of their shareholder's money to determine the outcome in candidate elections, the Court has unleashed into our elections tremendous sums of money from for-profit corporations that cannot possibly be matched in quantity by contributions from ordinary citizens. The only possible outcome of this is that big money and special interests will have a tighter grip on our democracy."

This decision allows lobbyists to tell elected officials, "If you vote wrong, my company, labor union or interest group will spend unlimited sums to advertise explicitly against your reelection." The biggest beneficiaries might be well-placed incumbents whose favor companies and interests groups are eager to court, as well as state and local governments where not that much money can have a strong influence on elections.

Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, an attorney with the Brennan Center for Justice in New York (SC League members met with Ms. Torres-Spelliscy previously) recognizes that, for Congress, this ruling comes in the run-up to important midterm elections in 2010, changing the rules of the fundraising game radically. She expects us to see money pouring into ads supporting key House and Senate committee members to curry favor, and also into ads supporting potential challengers as a way of threatening sitting lawmakers with ouster.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

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2009-2010

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*This is my first chance to wish everyone a very happy new year. 2010 is a very special year for the LWVUS. It is the 90th anniversary of the 19th amendment and the 90th anniversary of the national League. There will be celebrations throughout the year which we hope you will attend (our first being at the Cinema Arts Centre on March 24th). It is also the 91st anniversary of LWVNY, founded in 1919, and the 79th anniversary of the LWV of Huntington, founded in 1931. We have a long history of achievements over the years, but now is not the time to look back but to look ahead to what we can and need to do.*

*I am happy to report that on January 20, 2010, both the NYS Assembly and the Senate overwhelmingly passed the Ethics and Campaign Finance Reform bill (S.6457/A.9544). This is certainly a good step forward towards fixing Albany. I want to thank all our members who contacted their state senators, urging them to pass the bill. However, that very same week, the United States Supreme Court ruled that corporations have the same rights as individuals and that government cannot ban their political spending. The Court interpreted that as a First Amendment violation. This allows unlimited corporate funds in campaigns. According to LWVUS, this is constitutionally irresponsible and a tragic mistake. On April 21, LWV of Huntington will be having Ciara Torres Spelliscy, an attorney with the Brennan Center for Justice, as our guest speaker to address this issue. We hope you will all attend. However, before this meeting, we will be sending our action alerts on what to do; and I hope each one of you will be involved and take action.*

*Another very important issue which we should be actively supporting this year is affordable housing. The LWV of Huntington has had a position on affordable housing even before the national League. We have been advocating for a diversity of affordable housing opportunities. In November of 2007, we cosponsored a Leader's Symposium for Affordable Housing with Supervisor Frank Petrone. Everyone agreed there was a need for more affordable housing in Huntington and looked at ways that it could be fast tracked. It is now more than two years later, and there continues to be more than ever a need for affordable housing. The recent recession has left even people who had been against affordable housing either needing it themselves, or for a family member. There are few amongst us who do not know someone who could benefit from affordable housing in Huntington. The good news is that things are moving forward. At the town board meeting on February 9th at Huntington Town Hall at 7 p.m., there will be a hearing on the Town of Huntington Consolidation Plan. Amendments to the town zoning laws which will offer greater opportunities for the establishment of affordable housing in the form of owner-occupied and rental units will be discussed. On March 9th at Huntington Town Hall at 7 p.m. at that month's Town Board meeting, there will be a hearing on Avalon Bay, a proposed development of 530 residential units. This could provide ownership, rental and senior housing, 20% being affordable. For those who want to learn more about affordable housing in Huntington, go to [www.Huntingtonhousingcoalition.org](http://www.Huntingtonhousingcoalition.org). For those who are proponents of this housing, please attend the meetings on Feb. 9th and March 9th. Even if you do not want to speak out at the meetings, your attendance will be a show of support.*

*Remember, the mission of the LWV is to encourage active and informed participation in government and to influence public policy through advocacy and education. The members of your Board will continue to work hard to provide you with the information and programs to keep you up to date on the issues. We have a wonderful League with outstanding members. Together, we can make a difference.*

**Judie Gorenstein**

## **SUPREME COURT DECISION**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

Torres-Spelliscy sees this, though, as a time for sound policy responses, and advises that it is key now for members of Congress to not panic, to consider the options. It calls for thoughtful firebreaks to keep billions in corporate money from sweeping into our elections, to slow the money wildfire. She proposes a change in security laws to allow shareholders authority and oversight over corporate and political spending, modeling it after a British law of 2000. Also, public financing can be instituted for congressional elections. Such legislation is already underway with Fair Elections Now Act. Senator Charles Schumer of New York and Representative Chris Van Hollen of Maryland have been working for months to draft legislation in response to this anticipated decision.

As Ms. Wilson sums it up: “Congress and the President enacted campaign finance laws over a series of decades for a reason—to protect our democracy from the perverse influence of big money in our elections. In making this decision, the Court has ignored the best interests of the American public and our representative form of government.”

*Katherine Hoak*

### **Resources**

- *Citizens United Decision Sets Off Revolution in Campaign Finance*, Press Release, League of Women Voters of the United States, 1/21/2010
- *A Bad Call on Campaign Finance*, Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, Special to CNN, Attorney with the Brennan Center for Justice in New York, 1/25/2010
- *Justices, 5-4. Reject Corporate Spending Limit*, Adam Liptak, The New York Times, January 22, 2010
- *Lobbyists Get Potent Weapon in Campaign Ruling*, David D. Kirkpatrick, The New York Times, January 22, 2010

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## **WATER FOR LONG ISLAND**

### **The Problem**

The November 20, 2009, Symposium confirmed the need for a Long Island Water Management Agency. Although the aquifers are under four counties, Kings (Brooklyn), Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk, no studies have been done of the entire aquifer. Neither is there any kind of management system for the entire aquifer system. Long Island is one of the few aquifer systems that still does not have a management plan.

The Huntington Voter

Periodically, the New York City counties attempt to use the aquifers again. Both Nassau and Suffolk Counties have mammoth building projects under discussion. Sewering and new regulations regarding stormwater runoff require massive withdrawals of water from the aquifers. Population growth has also contributed to withdrawal rate which exceed replenishment rates. From the studies that have been done in certain areas, we know that there is a slow, but steady, decline in the aquifer level. Furthermore, we are able to document the rise of sea level, especially on the south shore. So, we must plan to manage this crucial resource, potable water, in order to ensure an adequate supply in the future.

### **The Solution**

Using the Delaware River Basin Commission plan as a model, Water for Long Island is now in the process of drafting a management plan for Long Island aquifers. In this plan, Long Island is defined as Nassau and Suffolk; the other counties are part of the NYC system which now uses the upstate watershed area as its source of water. This agency will be responsible for getting the appropriate studies completed and for adopting policies, based on science, to manage the entire watershed area and the aquifer system, including allocating the resource, permitting well construction, and monitoring the resource. The agency will emphatically not replace any of the local water authorities or companies which currently exist. Ensuring that replenishment matches extraction and mitigating the effects of sea level rise are the dual missions of this agency.

### **The Method**

Once the draft model plan for the *Long Island Aquifer Management Agency* is completed, the Water for Long Island group will visit the various members of the NY State Nassau and Suffolk legislators, both Senators and Assemblymen, to seek their support for such legislation. Assemblymen Englebright and Schimel, as noted at the Symposium, favor such an agency and would likely support such a bill. Steve Englebright is a geologist by training and clearly understands the need for management of this resource. Michelle Schimel represents an area that has already struggled with salt water intrusion of the aquifer. She understands how this problem can threaten an entire community and, therefore, understands the need for management of this precious resource. Water for Long Island intends to work closely with State, County, Town, and Village officials, as well as with the local water districts. Again, the goal is to ensure a sustainable supply of potable water and to mitigate the problems arising from sea level rise.

*Dorothy Cappadona*

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Let's prepare to interview our county legislators: Lynne Nowick, Steve Stern, Louis D'Amato and Jon Cooper. Kindly RSVP your preference for a committee meeting date:

Tuesday, Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10 a.m.  
Thursday, Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>, 10a.m.  
Wednesday, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7:30 p.m.

*Arlene Forward*

## VOTER SERVICE REPORT

The Voter Service Committee looks forward to another productive year. Our dedicated members have risen to every occasion enabling us to educate the electorate through public forums, voter registration drives and *Vote 18*. The three public forums, Meet the Candidates Night, Health Care Forum, and the Councilmanic Referendum Forum, were all well attended and highly informative. We have hosted registration drives and distributed more copies of the *Directory of Public Officials* than we can count.

In 2010, we look forward to more challenges and more interesting, successful events. With the recent certification of the optical scanner voting machine, we anticipate opportunities to work with the Suffolk County Board of Elections in informing the public of this new way of casting their votes and means through which they can become familiar with them before the fall elections.

We will continue to offer the presentation of the interactive lesson on voting, *Vote 18*, to high school seniors and college students. We are also planning to expand these presentations to middle schools in Huntington. We will begin contacting social studies chairpersons next month. In addition, we intend to sponsor an *Inside Albany* essay completion for area high school seniors. Winner(s) will spend a couple of days in Albany getting a first-hand look at state government.

Of course, we will be involved in voter registration drives throughout the year and welcome any of our members to participate in any of our functions. Many thanks as always to the current members of this committee for their commitment to serving our community in this way.

The next meeting of the Voter Service Committee will be on Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. at my home. Please contact me by email: [dcslavin@aol.com](mailto:dcslavin@aol.com) if you would like to join us.

*Dianne Slavin*

## NEWS FROM TOWN HALL (Jan. 12, 2010)

Decisions were reserved at the Hearings to consider amending the Uniform Traffic Code for Commercial and Construction Vehicles on Norview Ct., Huntington Station. Decision to allow a limited number of ducks on residential property was reserved. The Hearing for the Community Development Agency's 5 Year Consolidation Plan and first year Annual Plan on Housing and Community Development needs of the Town of Huntington was concluded.

### RESOLUTIONS

The Town Board assigned 1 and 2 year terms to

- Institutions as bank depositories
- Members of the Huntington Community Development Agency
- Jo-Ann Raia as Marriage Officer
- Planning Board members
- Zoning Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman
- Bond Counselors and Insurance Brokers
- The Long Islander and The Observer as Official Newspapers

The Town Board authorized the Supervisor to execute Agreements with

- The Youth Bureau and the Department of Human Services
- Centerport Sewer District and Northport Sewerage Treatment Plant
- Maintenance providers for Huntington and Northport Sewer Districts, Dix Hills Water District, Town of Huntington Wastewater Treatment Facility Huntington Sewer District
- The Town of Huntington Economic Development Corp.

The Supervisor was authorized to apply for funding from Suffolk County for the Residential Repair Program for the Elderly of Huntington. The Town Board voted to establish A.R.M.S. (Americans Reactivated for Military service).

### SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING: FEBRUARY 9, 2010 AT 7:00 PM to consider adopting

- Local Law Intro. No. 1-2010 amending the Code (Registration of Rental Property)
- Local Law Intro. No. 2-2010 amending the Code to add a new Residence-Open Space Cluster Zoning Classification
- Local Law Intro. No. 3-2010 amending the Code (Residence Districts).
- Local Law Intro. No. 3-2010 amending the Code Subdivision Regulations and Site Improvement Specifications to create the Huntington Station Transit Oriented District
- Zone Change application No. 2008-ZM-378 of AVALON BAY COMMUNITIES.

*JoAnn McCarthy*

## THE ENVIRONMENT

On Wednesday, December 9, 2009, our League co-sponsored an environmental event with Cinema Arts. Although we had a nor'easter all through the day, we had 40 stalwart attendees who were treated to a new movie called "The Age of Stupid," and presentations by two expert women in the field of protecting our environment: Sara Newkirk, from the Nature Conservancy, and Diane Schuster from NYPIRG. Afterwards, we were treated to the Cinema's famous cocktail reception during which we were given the opportunity to discuss how we can best address the growing concerns of what should be done to stop, if not reverse, what damage has already been done to our planet. It was an extremely enlightening, educational and enjoyable night. Once again our chapter has provided a forum for topical and important facts.

*Brenda Reiss*

### Huntington LWV to participate in LWWNY Consolidation/Shared Services Study

The League of Women Voters of Huntington will conduct a local study as part of the NYS League's examination of the consequences of consolidation of certain governmental units and consolidation of services in multi-governmental localities.

**The Study:** The question remains, is there consensus that the LWV can use to weigh in on proposed changes?

By the end of January, the NY State League will give local Leagues questions and study guides in order to determine if we can identify and establish standards to assess proposals for consolidating governmental units or shared services. There may also be an opportunity to consider mandating specific types of consolidations/dissolutions. Reports will be due back to the State League in May.

**All Huntington LWV members are invited to participate in the Huntington LWV Consensus process. Meeting dates will be announced shortly.**

**Background:** Noreen Fisher, Chair, LWWNYS Government Consolidation Committee, reported that New York State has among the highest local property taxes in the nation and among the largest number of governmental units. Our State has a complex layering of 1,607 general-purpose local

governments made up of 57 counties, 932 towns, 62 cities, 556 villages, all of which have taxing power, can issue debt, and are covered by home rule protections under the state constitution, and 14 Native American reservations.

She also explained that numerous commissions have convened to examine this issue, most recently the Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness. The Lundine Commission issued its final report, which concluded that major efficiencies could be recognized by consolidation of certain governmental units and consolidation of services on a multi-governmental basis.

Fisher further pointed out that consolidation is not limited to a simple merger of two local governmental units or the merger of school districts. It also contemplates the consolidation of special districts such as fire, library, water, sewer, etc.; the consolidation of local public authorities; and the consolidation of municipal services without the loss of the underlying governmental units, such as civil service hiring, assessing, IT, purchasing, etc., all with the intent of reducing costs.

**Learn More:** For further details and background, please consult the LWWNYS website:  
[http://lwvny.org/consolidation\\_sss.html](http://lwvny.org/consolidation_sss.html)

Huntington's Study Co-chairs are Brenda Reiss and Ann Gardner. Please join us!

*Ann M. Gardner*

## MEMBERSHIP

We are happy to welcome several new members to the Huntington League of Women Voters. We hope that we will have an opportunity to meet and welcome them personally at future functions of the League.

Ruth Berger  
Richard Koubek  
Eric Alexander  
Constance Hoest  
Mr. & Mrs. Martin Ben-Ari  
Barbara Roggie  
Jane Petti

*Irene Ferrand*

CALENDAR

Date	Time	Subject	Location
Feb. 9	7 PM	Town Board Meeting	Huntington Town Hall
Feb. 11	10 PM	LWV Consolidation Study	Ann Gardner's Home
Feb. 18	1 PM	LWV of Huntington Board Meeting and Program Planning	Elwood Public Library
Feb. 19	10 AM	Voter Service Meeting	Diane Slavin's Home
Mar. 9	7 PM	Town Board Meeting (Hearing on Avalon Bay)	Huntington Town Hall
Mar. 18	1 PM	LWV of Huntington Board Meeting	Elwood Public Library
Mar. 24	TBA	Celebrate Women's History Month	Cinema Arts Centre
Apr. 4	10 AM	Legislative Committee Meeting	Arlene Forward's Home
Apr. 9	7 PM	Town Board Meeting (Hearing on Zoning Changes)	Huntington Town Hall
Apr. 11	10 AM	LWV Committee for Consolidation Study	Ann Gardner's Home
Apr. 21	7 PM	Supreme Court Decision & Campaign Financing	Harborfield's Public Library
Jun. 22	6:30 PM	Annual Dinner and Meeting (start collecting auction items)	Bonwit Inn



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**MEMBERSHIP  
FISCAL YEAR 7/01/2009 – 7/01/2010**

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HUNTINGTON**

The League is supported by dues and the contributions of members and friends. All memberships include subscriptions to the Huntington VOTER, the State League VOTER and the National League VOTER. By joining the Huntington League, you automatically become a member of the Suffolk County League, LWVNYS and LWVUS.

Dues paid to your local league support all levels of League activity. The Huntington League sends \$24.35 to LWVUS, \$16.00 to LWVNYS and \$1.50 to the Suffolk County League per member per year.

Enclosed is my check for:

_____ Individual Membership	\$ 60.00
_____ Household Membership (2 or more)	75.00
_____ Donor Membership	75.00
_____ Patron Membership	100.00
_____ Student	20.00

Enclosed is an additional contribution of \$10.00 or more to offset the cost of printing and mailing the "Huntington Voter".

Please make checks payable to the LWV of Huntington and mail to the address below.

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: Additional tax-deductible donations to the League beyond the dues amount may be made by writing a separate check to: "LWVNYS Education Foundation" and mailed to the address below.

Mail to: Irene Ferrand, Membership Chair  
37 Sherwood Drive  
Huntington, NY 11743