



The League of Women Voters of The Rivertowns

Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson and Irvington
www.watpa.org/lwv/rivertowns

BULLETIN – OCTOBER 2009

President's Letter

Dear Fellow Members and Friends of the League,

The summer flew by and we are all busy with our fall activities and preparations for the winter. Your local League has been busy planning the next installment of our "Coffee and Conversation" program in which we invite local experts and government officials to discuss issues of local interest.

The next program will be held on Friday, October 16, 2008 from 10:30 a.m. to noon at the Hastings Public Library. The topic is Livable Communities and the guest speaker will be Linda Schulz. I urge all of you to attend this discussion of a topic that will affect each of us sooner or later.

We will also host a candidates' night in Dobbs Ferry on Wednesday, October 21, 2009 from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Embassy Community Center. All are welcome to attend.

Lindsay Nicely Feinberg

Board Briefs

June: Our Annual Meeting on June 6 at the home of Ernie and Jean Howell. Board members reported on the Waterfront and Health Care committees, and the Coffee and Conversation meetings. We exchanged ideas on how to proceed on these projects in the fall. The Treasurer's Report, Election and Appointment of Officers, Adoption of Local Program, and Directions to the Board by our president, Lindsay, followed. We then enjoyed the beautiful setting, including the passing of some historic ships; a good lunch; and an interesting and informative talk by Andrea Stewart Cousins.

August: We had a summer planning meeting at Pat's home to get a head start organizing our early fall events, the Dobbs Ferry Festa, Voter Guide distribution, and October's Coffee.

September: We worked on planning for the Festa, the October Coffee, and action on health care reform, Voter Guide distribution and Dobbs Ferry Candidates Night. Also, we began updating our web site, and brainstorming on how to increase membership and funds.

VILLAGE ELECTIONS

For several years Dobbs Ferry and Ardsley have held their village elections in November. At this time the Ardsley election is uncontested. In Dobbs Ferry both the Dobbs Ferry and Democratic parties are fielding a slate for mayor and three trustees.

As is our custom, the Rivertowns League is organizing a meeting of Dobbs Ferry candidates on Wednesday, October 21st at 7:30 PM at the Embassy Community Center on Palisade Street. If you are a Dobbs Ferry voter or just interested in what your neighbors are thinking, please come.

HEALTH CARE update

As our collective fingers remain crossed, in hope that some meaningful reform will yet be enacted by Congress, the LWVW health care committee has partnered with the National Association of Social Workers Westchester to plan a public meeting, "**HEALTH CARE ISSUES: URGENT ISSUES, CRITICAL INFORMATION**", at New York Presbyterian Hospital - Main Building, 21 Bloomingdale Road, White Plains, on Monday, October 19, 5:30-7:30 PM. Everyone welcome, light refreshments and coffee available.

Mark Hannay, Director, New York Metro Health Care for All Campaign, will discuss **congressional bills** and proposed NYS legislation. Mary Beth Morrissey, MPH, Health Care Attorney, Fordham Ravazzin Center on Aging, will discuss **health care costs**.

Meanwhile, Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) continues to speak out forcefully for single payer health reform. These New York congressmen support single payer: Weiner, Towns, Clarke, Rangel, Engel, McNulty, Hinchey, Maloney, Meeks, Nadler, and Serrano.

The next LWVW health care committee meeting will be Thursday, October 8, 1:00 PM at the home of Madeline Zevon (761-4382), 17 Dupont Ave., White Plains. **Mary Kaufman, Emma Lou Louis and Chris Verber** are Rivertowns members of this group

WATERFRONT happenings

Quadracentennial events: an August 16 afternoon of re-enactment, education and fun at DF Waterfront Park, Dobbs Ferry; "Lights on Irvington" September 13-16; and Hastings September 13 celebration. On September 12th, anniversary of Henry Hudson's river voyage, the Hudson River Museum sponsored a cruise (for 500 or so) to retrace his journey,

We invite you to the LWVW Waterfront Group next scheduled meeting: Monday, November 9, 1:30 PM at the home of Mary Wall; 150 Draper Lane, Apt. 1GN (reached by the brick walk). We focus on the Hudson River and watershed issues.

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

Although attendance has not been as large as we would have liked, we believe that those who have participated would agree that these informal gatherings have been both enjoyable and enlightening. Therefore we do intend to continue the program in the coming year and have changed the day to Friday in hope that day may work better for more of you. We urge you to come and bring a friend. We also would welcome your suggestions for topics you would like to learn more about or speakers you would like to hear.

The Rivertowns League invites you for

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION!

Friday, October 16, 2009, 10:30 AM at the Hastings Library

Meet other members and discuss issues in an informal setting.

Linda Schulz

Westchester Jewish Community Services

Liaison to Livable Community Connections Project

will introduce us to Livable Communities . . .

Starting a Village . . .

Following her presentation there will be time for your questions and input.

ALL ARE WELCOME !!!

Bring a Friend

Our next Coffee and Conversation is scheduled for November 20

Any questions? Email (c_verber@hotmail.com) or call Christine at (693-9054)

NYS PUBLIC AUTHORITIES IN THE NEWS

Assemblyman Richard Brodsky and Senator Bill Perkins are urging Gov. Paterson to sign a recently passed reform measure re New York's 800 public authorities. It would create an independent Authorities Budget Office, require the state comptroller to sign off on contracts over \$1 million, provide whistle-blower protection to workers, and require board members to have fiduciary responsibility to the agency rather than those who appointed them.

Critics object to cost of the new office (\$1 million or more) and a requirement that any sale of assets must be at fair market value. Another view was expressed in a Journal News letter to the editor, "We don't need an overhaul of public authorities; we need to eliminate them entirely and get back to the fundamentals of the government operating under its Constitutional restrictions to protect the residents."

Established 75 years ago, **public authorities** are non-profit corporations, funded through tax-free bonds, to finance bridges, tunnels, airports and public transportation. In the 1960's authorities multiplied to finance housing and urban development, but are now routine for raising \$20+ billion in tax money without directly asking for higher taxes.

Unlike early authorities, most authorities do not produce an income stream; they are responsible for \$221 billion in debt, with only one quarter payable by their own income. (They generate revenue by issuing more bonds.)

REFORM IN ALBANY?

Post- stalemate, the NYS Senate passed changes that NYSLWV considers helpful in making it more open and accountable, but which also codify inequitable distribution of both resources and member items between majority and minority parties (from 10:1 to 2:1).

Changes include:

- Greater transparency - All hearings and standing committee meetings shall be recorded and posted on the web site within 24 hours.

- Action - a majority of senators can move a bill from calendar to the active list. 3/5 of the full senate can move a bill from committee to the active list.

- C-SPAN - Leaders of the two houses (through an advisory board) will report on ways to expand television offerings.

- Increased oversight and hearings of committees; 1/3 of a committee can call for hearings.

These changes were negotiated by leadership behind closed doors. While laudable, they indicate the Senate has not yet matured from its dysfunctional state. Additional recommendations are due by December 1.

Of interest: Sandra Galef's (D-Ossining) bill to ban smoking on public playgrounds has passed the Assembly, but requires Senate approval. "We lose 25,000 New Yorkers every year to smoking ..." Greenburgh and New York City prohibit smoking on playgrounds.

VOTING RATE DIPPED SLIGHTLY IN 2008

Census figures show that 131.1 million (63.6%) U. S. citizens 18 and older voted in 2008, an increase of 5 million voters - mostly minorities. However, turnout was down from 63.8% in 2004.

Figures document a decline (from 2004) of older white voters (notably in Ohio and Pennsylvania); turnout among 45 and older whites fell 1.5% to 72%; overall white vote was down 1% (to 66%). Increased minority voting was key to election results; black vote increased 5% to 65%; Hispanics improved by 3% and Asians by 3.5% to almost 50%. This election was the most diverse on record; nearly a quarter of votes were minority.

49% of 18 to 24 year olds voted, compared to 47% in 2004; 55% of young blacks voted, an 8% jump. Among that age group turnout was 49% for whites, 41% for Asians, and 39% for Hispanics.

NYS LWV

Incoming state president, Betsey Swan, has set three goals: bridge the divide between state and local Leagues, improve League's financial base, bring a new level of dynamism to LWV.

Current activities include preparation for 2009 elections (including Voter's Guide), development of a new youth outreach program, Government Consolidation/Shared Services study, issues and advocacy website, capitol beat, getting to know local Leagues.

On August 26, Pres. Betsey Swan released a statement urging immediate removal of radioactive and chemical contaminants from the West Valley Nuclear Waste Site at Ashford, 35 miles south of Buffalo - instead of phased remediation which would defer some decisions for 30 years. Phased cleanup would: pose unacceptable risk to water supply, be more costly, remove cleanup from public scrutiny.

"Our system of government is based upon public controls, not public 'confidence' regarding what government officials do in concealment." (Bev. Harris)

FROM NATIONAL

LWVUS has stood firm on support of a (moderate) version of health care reform legislation, and urges our continued input to legislators, media, etc. LWVUS filed suit against the "League of American Voters" which spread lies about proposed reform measures and targeted LWV.

The U. S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs will fund an Education Fund project, "Connecting Future Legislators and Civil Society: Brazil and Columbia" - to strengthen understanding of legislative processes in the U. S., Columbia and Brazil, and deepen appreciation of civil society's role.

IMMIGRANTS - food for thought

What is the scope of our “immigration problem”? SUNY Albany Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Policy, Rey Koslowski, addressed the Saratoga County LWV Annual Meeting on this topic.

Legal immigrants with green cards-- 1.2 million issued in 2006-- include about 63% who come for family unification, about a third for employment, and refugees. The annual cap for **refugees and asylum seekers** is 70,000.

Temporary migrants, with non-immigrant visas, include visitors, students, and skilled workers. The U. S. has **12 million illegal immigrants** - 45% of whom entered legally, but overstayed their visas. Smuggling and human trafficking are included in this number; demand for cheap labor has fed the problem.

Dr. Koslowski warned that immigration is a highly complex issue with no easy fix.

CENSUS

Coming next March: a Census 2010 questionnaire, 10 questions to be answered and mailed back. It will provide a national snapshot of who we are, determine the number of U. S. representatives apportioned to each state, help in allocation of \$400 billion in federal money, and provide data for establishing state and local legislative district boundaries. It is also a guide for locating retail stores, schools, hospitals, new housing developments and other community facilities. Villages can become “census partners” (Liz Dreaper the DF contact).

Be sure to return the form promptly; home visits are made only when the form is not returned.

WIND POWER (browsings from Florida via Plattsburg to LWVR)

“Wind, used in Iran over 4,000 years ago, was employed in the middle ages to grind corn, and by farmers in many countries. The US ranks third in Wind Power capacity, behind Germany and Spain. Wind farms function best in coastal areas, plains, and gaps in the mountains. ... There are 58 wind farms in 16 states. Texas has the most, including the largest wind farm in the world. ..Less than one percent of U. S. energy is currently produced by wind. The US Department of Energy’s goal for 2030 is to increase the percent to 20.

“The advantages and disadvantages of wind power ... Wind is free, turbines are low maintenance, require little fuel, have no emissions or by products, do not deplete resources, and can be a tourist attraction. In recent years the economics of wind farms have improved. The cost per kilowatt hour has been reduced from 30 cents to 4 1/2-7 1/2 cents. Wind farms are expensive to build, especially in coastal areas, wind is not predictable, and the turbines may kill birds and interfere with TV reception. ... (In) Massachusetts ... birds were able to adapt to wind farms, by flying over them.

RIVERTOWNS LWV OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS – 2008/2009

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PROGRAM 2009–10 (*slightly abridged*)

1. Develop an outreach plan for new residents to introduce them to League programs.
2. Review Master Plans and advocate adoption by each of the villages.
3. Support of village manager form of government, village financing and services. Support citizen participation in village planning.
4. Support village planning for affordable housing, open space, and waterfront planning.
5. Support services of village libraries and provide educational and information forums.
6. Support local fair housing initiatives and measures to increase local affordable housing.
7. Provide scholarship to public school graduates and continue outreach to students.
8. Continue to monitor and support riverfront planning in ways that promote riverfront planning that balances local land use, environmental, and revenue generating concerns
9. Promote awareness of League of Women Voters of the Rivertowns' positions and activities.

IN THE RIVERTOWNS

We welcome back president **Lindsay Feinberg** after summer trips to Ireland and Italy, Kathy Sundaram from South Carolina, all you others.

Thanks to all who helped with the League table at the Dobbs Ferry Festa, especially **Jean and Ernie Howell** who set it up. Others involved were: **Lindsay Feinberg, Sumi & Sam Koide, Claire Lee, Emma Lou Louis, Ruth Neuwirth, and Kathy Sundaram.**

After further refinement, the proposed Dobbs Ferry zoning code will again be discussed at a series of hearings. **Watch for dates!**

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