



HEADLINES

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WHITE PLAINS

PRESIDENT, MARJORIE DAVIES

MAY/JUNE 2009

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**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS OF WHITE PLAINS
ANNUAL DINNER
MEETING**



**Wednesday,
May 27, 6:30 pm**

at the home of
Roberta Lazarus
16 Sherman Avenue

Please call Lyn Lubliner (997 1515)
or Carol Fritz (761 1037) for reservations

Cost: \$15 per person

**WHITE PLAINS SCHOOL BOARD
CANDIDATES TO SPEAK ON
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2009**

Details inside.



WHITE PLAINS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES TO SPEAK ON TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2009

The League of Women Voters of White Plains will host a public forum for candidates for the 2009 White Plains Board of Education election.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. at White Plains High School, 550 North Street, in Room B-1 (across from the Staff Parking Lot; enter campus from North Street). All White Plains voters are encouraged to attend and ask questions of the candidates. The evening's program will also include a presentation on the proposed 2009-2010 School Budget by Superintendent Timothy Connors.

Three seats on the seven-member Board will be available in this year's election. They are held currently by Donna McLaughlin, Terry McGuire and Peter Bassano. All candidates who have filed petitions by the April 29th deadline will be invited to participate in the meeting. Board members serve without pay, and terms of office are for three years, effective July 1.

The Board of Education election is Tuesday, May 19. Citizens will vote on the annual school budget, as well as electing board members. At the forum, the candidates will answer questions from the floor about their position on the budget and other issues relating to the schools.

Polls will be open on May 19 from noon to 9 p.m. Voters unsure of their polling place or who need absentee ballots may call the Clerk of the Board of Education at 422-2071. Voter registration information is available from the Clerk of the Board and from the Westchester County Board of Elections, 995-5700.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Lightning can strike twice, I firmly believe. You may remember that last year my granddaughter won the New York State League's Education Foundation Big Raffle. The family naturally was thrilled. So this year I decided to add two more granddaughters to the pool. Although I actually will be embarrassed if we should win again, the odds really are good. I encourage you to buy the tickets you received from LWVNY, and I have more should you need them. Even if we don't win, each local league gets a portion of the pot and the State league wins as well.

On Tuesday, May 12, the White Plains League will host our annual school board candidates forum at the White Plains High School, Room B-1. We have decided to hold the forum even if the election proves to be uncontested; we will not know until after April 29, when petitions are due. In addition, there will be a brief presentation by Superintendent Timothy Connors on the school budget for next year. Don't forget to vote in the School Board Election and Budget Vote on Tuesday, May 19th. Polls are open from noon until 9 p.m.; absentee ballots are available from the District Clerk, 422-2071.

Our Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 27th. After dinner (only \$15.00) we will conduct program adoption, budget adoption, and election of officers and directors. The packet of information is in preparation and will be available at the meeting. Please call Marjorie Davies, 949-1886, if you would like to see it in advance.

Marjorie Davies, President



League in Love

Congratulations
to League members
Judy Meyer and Ted Morse
on their marriage.

GROUPS CHEER PASSAGE OF BIGGER BETTER BOTTLE BILL

(Albany, NY) Groups from across the state applauded passage of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill today (April 5) as part of the 2009-10 state budget. This momentous achievement is the first major overhaul of the state's bottle deposit law since it was created in 1982, and caps a grueling nine-year campaign to expand and update the law. The update expands New York's bottle return law to include water bottles, which comprise nearly a quarter of all beverages sold in New York. The law also requires beverage companies to return 80% of the unclaimed bottle and can deposits to the state, generating upwards of \$115 million annually for the General Fund. "This is a huge victory not only for the environment, but for the people of New York," said Laura Haight, senior environmental associate with NYPIRG. "As a result of this law, we will have noticeably cleaner communities and far more recycling. At the same time, the money from the public's unclaimed nickels will go to work for us, not for Coke and Pepsi."

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEW LAW

The expansion, which goes into effect on June 1st, will require a deposit on all water bottles sold in New York. According to the Container Recycling Institute, more than 3.2 billion water bottles were sold in New York State alone – nearly a quarter of the state's total beverage sales. Bottled water represents 70% of the total noncarbonated beverage sales in New York which previous versions of the bill sought to capture. Water bottles are one of the most common items found in litter cleanups in New York. Without a deposit, most of these containers end up in the trash or polluting our communities. Oregon and Connecticut have also recently expanded their deposit laws to include bottled water. The law requires beverage companies to return 80% of the unclaimed deposits to the state General Fund, raising an estimated \$115 million next year. Since 1982, beer and soda companies have retained more than \$2 billion in unclaimed deposits. This legislation brings New York into line with other states, such as Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, Hawaii, and most recently Connecticut, which

already escheat unclaimed beverage container deposits. The law also includes a number of measures that will improve opportunities for New Yorkers to return their empty bottles and cans, including incentives for small business and nonprofit redemption centers and requirements for large stores to maintain dedicated areas for bottle and can returns. These provisions, plus the expansion and an increased handling fee, will lead to the creation of thousands of new jobs across the state.

HURRAY FOR US

"The League of Women Voters of New York State joins our coalition partners in applauding Governor Paterson, Majority Leader Malcolm Smith and Speaker Sheldon Silver for expanding beverage recycling to include water bottles," said Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director. "This will remove water bottles from the waste stream and return nickels deposits for much needed state revenue."



Now that we have a better bottle bill, how about charging for plastic bags?



SINGLE PAYER HEALTH CARE: MEDICARE FOR ALL

What is single payer? It refers to the administration of health care funds by one payer, rather than by the current multiple insurance companies. This payer would be the federal government. Think of single payer as enhanced and improved Medicare for all. The League of Women Voters of Westchester, New York State and the U.S. League all advocate for Single Payer health care

Can we afford covering the 47 million uninsured and the 50 million underinsured? Yes, we can. Currently insurance companies have an overhead of approximately 30%, which is spent on marketing, administration, shareholders dividends and exorbitant CEO salaries. Medicare's overhead is approximately 3%. We could save about \$350 billion annually, enough to cover the 47 million uninsured and the 50 million underinsured. Both the Congressional Budget Office and the General Accounting Office say the U.S. could insure everyone for the money we're paying now to insure seniors only

Is this socialized medicine? No, it is not. With socialized medicine, doctors and hospitals are owned by the government. As with Medicare, hospitals would be semi-private just as they are now and doctors would be in private practice just as they are now. Single payer would place the costly inefficient system of private insurance. Paperwork would be greatly reduced because there would be only one entity to deal with.

Is there growing support for single payer? Yes, there is. 59% of physicians support legislation to establish national health insurance. 65% of Americans agree that the U.S. should adopt a program like Medicare for all. We spend twice as much on health care as other industrialized nations, and they cover all of their population. Every other industrialized country in the world has national health insurance. We are the only country that uses private, for-profit insurance to finance health care for the majority of our population.

Do we need to improve our current medicare system? Yes, we do. Medicare is suffering financially because of the intrusion of private HMO's which were initially put into place as a cost-effective system but were actually less cost effective. HMO's are subsidized by the government, cherry-pick healthy patients, and yet their costs are 12% more than traditional Medicare. This system costs the taxpayers \$15 billion a year. Each year half of all personal bankruptcies

are caused by medical bills, and 75% of those bankrupted were insured when they got sick. Insurance premiums go up each year for policies that cover less and less. The goal of insurance companies is to make a profit for their shareholders and CEOs.

Is there current legislation in Congress for single payer? Yes, there is. HR676 provisions cover all primary and preventive health care: prescription drugs, mental health services, dentistry, eye care, substance abuse treatment and long-term care. There are no co-pays or deductibles. The government already pays for a significant proportion of our health care. Since 60% of our health care system is currently financed by public money - Medicare, Medicaid, the VA and insurance for public employees- it makes sense to expand this coverage for all.

Major stumbling blocks are the drug and insurance companies. These powerful industries spend more than any other industry lobbying Congress. They succeeded in making Medicare part D a windfall for drug companies. Both former Senator Clinton and President Obama have said in the past that single payer makes the most sense but is not "politically feasible" at this time. The flaw in both their plans is that they involve insurance companies in the system, making reform financially unaffordable. This approach is not viable, as numerous state-based experiments have shown. Such plans fail because of the cost. All we need is the political will.

I worked for 17 years at an outpatient drug and alcohol facility in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. Virtually all of our clients had Medicaid insurance. During my time there, Medicaid came under HMO's. When this happened our fees were cut by 2/3 and our paperwork was increased by 2/3. I found myself, a social work supervisor, spending most of my time doing insurance paperwork or getting authorizations on the phone, rather than treating clients or supervising workers. Gradually our professional staff dwindled because we couldn't afford their salaries, caseloads grew, and we were mostly left with unsupervised para-professionals.

Health care does not fit the market model. It should be a matter between a doctor and his or her patient. It is a basic human right. The aim of our health care system should not be to make a profit for insurance and drug companies. It should be to provide affordable, high-quality care for all Americans.

Madeline Zevon

Vice President of the White Plains LWV and a member of the LWV of Westchester Health Committee



League of Women Voters of White Plains Statement on the Proposed 2009-2010 City of White Plains Tax Budget

The League has studied the White Plains Proposed 2009-2010 budget as part of its local program; the following represents a consensus of those participating in the study. We were disappointed that the City was unable to provide a presentation of the budget to help us in our discussion.

1. While we recognize the difficult times the City faces in the current economic climate, we are concerned by the application of over \$11 million of Undesignated Fund Balance to compensate for lost revenue available to fund this budget. The resulting drain on the available emergency funds may be expected to have a negative effect on the City's bond rating, resulting in higher borrowing costs to meet future needs.
2. The budget statement outlines new sources of income, which by charter cannot be included in this budget, to rebuild the fund balance and provide for long-term financial stability. While we support certain of these options, we believe others would be counter-productive. We have in the past supported the 3% hotel tax. To the sale of additional taxi and towing medallions, and commercial fire inspections fees we have no objections. The League believes that establishment of an industrial development agency is unlikely at this time, as is the additional 1/4% sales tax increment. However, the sale of fire stations 4 and 5, in addition to being one-time sources of funds, would appear to be inappropriate at this time. We are particularly opposed to the leasing of the 2 parking facilities (library and Galleria). Operation by a lessee would most certainly result in higher parking fees to users and would be of more benefit to the lessee than to the city.
3. Given the high proportion of the budget represented by salary and employee costs, we believe that the City must look to reduce these costs more effectively, unpleasant as this may be. Although valuing the contributions made by all staff, the City can no longer afford to be generous and must consider such cost-cutting measures as a temporary 2009-2010 wage freeze and mandatory furlough days for all employees. We have in the past called for expanding the use of co-payments to health care coverage costs in negotiations with various City bargaining units.
4. Perhaps especially in difficult economic times, we believe that the City still needs to maintain funding insofar as possible for Community Services. In particular, the League believes that the services provided by our wonderful library are essential to the continued well-being of all in the White Plains community, particularly our families.
5. The League of Women Voters of Westchester and the County Executive have called for a countywide revaluation of property in Westchester. Although we admit that such a revaluation is unlikely in the current economic situation, we believe tax appeals will continue to have a negative impact on the City budget and urge County and State legislators to pursue revaluation as a way to reintroduce equity into the property tax system.

Thank you for your consideration of the League's views on these issues.

Marjorie Davies, 5/4/09

WHITE PLAINS LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
11 Belmont Street, White Plains, NY 10605

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WHITE PLAINS. NY
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CALENDAR

MAY/JUNE 2009

- Monday, 5/4 Common Council, 7:30 p.m., 7:00 for Citizens to be Heard
- Monday, 5/11 Board of Education, Ed House, 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, 5/12 School Board Candidates Forum and Budget Presentation
White Plains High School, 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, 5/13 Board Meeting; home of Lyn Lubliner, 183 Albemarle Road, 1:15 p.m.
- 5 /15-17 LWVNYS State Convention, Doubletree Hotel, Syracuse, NY
- Tuesday, 5/19 Board of Education Budget Vote and Election, noon-9:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, 5/27 Annual Meeting, home of Roberta Lazarus, 16 Sherman Ave., 6:30 p.m.
- Monday, 6/1 Common Council, 7:30 p.m., 7:00 for Citizens to be Heard
- Monday, 6/8 Board of Education, WPHS, 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, 6/10 Board Meeting, 1:15 p.m.
- Wednesday, 6/17 Annual Picnic, home of Dorothy and Jonathan Schere, 14 Winslow Road, 6:30 p.m.