

December 2008

The Voter



League of Women Voters,
Rensselaer County NY

Special points of interest:

- Voter Services report and list of Election Night Reporters
- Health Care Reform program report
- Troy Housing Authority elections rescheduled

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Save the Date

Wednesday, January 14

***Post-Holiday
Pre-Inauguration***

Get Together!

We'll meet at the Krause Center:

2212 Burdett Avenue, Troy

(across from Samaritan Hospital)

6:00 pm catered dinner

Followed by a speaker at 7:00 pm

Further details will follow closer to the event

Members of the Board

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gdemarco@nycap.rr.com *Public Spokesperson, Receive/Distribute State and National Mailings, Mail and Phone Calls, New Member Orientation*

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Secretary Margaret Story 272-1566
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Treasurer Irene Wynnyczuk 279-9789
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Director Anne Burton 283-3499

aburton@usoncology.com *Public Relations, Member Involvement*

Director Hazel Landa 279-3714
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Director Mary Muller 274-0846
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Director George W. O'Connor 272-6512
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Director Donna Packard-Mahoney 283-6423
dmahoney@nycap.rr.com *Action/Issues/Advocacy*

Director Fred Stein 663-5230
fstein@nycap.rr.com *Natural Resources/Rensselaer Co. Government, Education*

Director David Wolcott 766-0242
DavidRWolcott72@cs.com *Election Night Reporting, Environment*

Letter from the Co-Presidents

Thanks to all who participated in voter service activities this election season. We registered many new voters, distributed stacks of voters' guides, and held candidate and issue forums around the county.

Now Governor Paterson has asked Secretary of State Lorraine Cortez-Vazquez to assess the election. He has asked her for recommendations on how the state can increase voter participation with a focus on: ways to simplify voter registration, the advisability of instituting early voting, and the status of New York's efforts to modernize our voting equipment. We hope to participate in this review.

In addition to voter services, we reviewed two proposals to update the City of Troy's charter, one from a commission created by Mayor Tutunjian and one from the City Council's commission. Both proposals in our view were deficient. When it was clear that only the Mayor's version would be on the ballot, we released a letter to the public recommending a "no" vote. Other city organizations urged the same vote, and on election day, voters rejected the proposal.

We now hope that a truly non-partisan charter commission can be created in Troy and that the public will be invited to participate more fully. Many thanks to George O'Connor, Steve Muller, Jill Nagy and Margaret Story for their involvement in reviewing the charter proposals.

We hope to see many of you at our Get Together on Wednesday, January 14. The more the merrier!

Diane Bell and Gail DeMarco, Co-Presidents

2008 Voter Service

It's time to congratulate ourselves on the many Voter Service activities conducted by the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County leading up to Election Day 2008.

LWV members facilitated a Candidate Forum for the Troy Neighborhood Association by providing a moderator, timer and question takers. We also assisted the Troy Public Library at two town meeting on the re-charter of the library..

A local Voter's Guide was prepared and distributed to all town and city halls and libraries along with state Voter Guides. The guides were also distributed to human service agencies for use with their clients.

Summer and fall found many LWV members helping with Voter Registration at the Troy Farmers Market, Head Start sites, the Corn Maze at Liberty Ridge Farm and Roarke Center. We also provided information to Joseph's House and Troy Teachers Association for their use in Voter Registration.

Voter Service is an important part of the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County. Many thanks to all of the members who helped make it successful this year.

Here is a list of Election Night Reporters who each contributed to our efforts to independently report results from locations in Troy, Brunswick, Rensse-

laer, and North Greenbush. Three cheers for the volunteers!

Abbott, Mary

Armstrong, Judy

Barrett, Michael

Barrett, Nancy

Beetle, Pat

Bell, Diane

Bell, Don

Blandy, Susan

Blandy, Tom

Bolgatz, Jean

Borton, Harriet

Burton, Anne

Caruso, Catherine

Chupka, Joyce

Clark, Sue

Colatosti, Mary

Delaney, Beth

DeMarco, Gail

Diwan, Joyce

Draper, Stacy

Ducatt, Jane

Estes, Carmella

Fairbanks, Anne

Filley, Derrick

Friberg, Mary Ellen

Higbee, Barbara Jones

Hohenberg, Paul

Hyde, Fran

Hyde, Jim

Kapp, Nancy

Landa, Hazel

Leising, Caroline

Lemka, Sue

Littlefield, Wendy

Muller, Mary and Steve

Nagy, Jill

Neary, Joyce

Neilsen, Jane

Noel, Trish

Noonan, Maureen

Norlander, Karen

O'Connor, George and Terry

Pattison, Nina

RPI freshman volunteers

Salmon, Chris

Shanley, Dinnie

Sheehan, Kathy

Singer, Margo

Smith, Carolyn

Smith, Cynthia

Smith, Lorrie

Story, Margaret

Tolan, Ellen

Urban, Barbara

Wolcott, David

Wynnyczuk, Irene

**Voter Service is
an important part
of the League of
Women Voters of
Rensselaer
County**

Health Care Reform.....Do We Need More Effort to Keep the Ball Rolling?

On October 25 2008 at the Rockefeller Institute in Albany, N. Y. the League of Women Voters of New York State and Capital Region County Chapters attempted to answer the question, "When you pull the lever on Nov. 4....what will happen to your healthcare?" Close to 70 League members and friends attended the forum in the hopes of understanding the presidential candidates' positions on the variety of health care reform options available- and which of the candidates agreed with the Leagues position on health care reform.

Elisa Streeter of WTEN, the moderator of the event, presented Donna Packard-Mahoney who gave the introductory remarks and began with the League's position on health care reform. She stated that the current method of financing, both private and public, does not satisfy the League's criteria of accessibility, equitability, quality, cost-containment, disease prevention, citizen participation and single payer as an acceptable method to meet these criteria. Donna is currently the N.Y. State League of Women Voters off-board specialist on health care.

Courtney Burke, a member of the Albany County League and the director of the NYS Health Policy Research Center then gave an overview and thumbnail sketch of the two presidential candidates' positions as they related to the above-mentioned League criteria. She said that "the Obama proposed Plan" was largely based on the Massachusetts Plan. (Similar to that plan is a program proposed for New York State called the Partnership for Coverage.) According to Courtney, more funds and physicians in the growth of the system does not mean better health care. The McCain proposed plan would focus on more state experimentation.

Mark Ustin, the third speaker of the morning, presented the McCain proposed plan as not offering a lot of details (as did the Obama plan) but as an expansion of the consumer role vs the government role. He described the "meaningfulness" concept, that is, what level of coverage is meaningful, and explained the economics of health care: supply vs cost, technology vs cost, and said that there should be an emphasis of cost control vs cost-shifting. Mark is an attorney, now in private practice, and has specialized in state health law and policy for the past 16 years in New York State Government.

The next and definitely the youngest speaker was Lydia Gottesfeld from Citizen Action of New York in the Capital District. She spoke to more options and details of the proposed Obama plan, including a requirement to provide coverage to "everyone that wants it" (not everyone...still not universal!) and a ban of denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions. Also proposed would be the indication of government involvement in healthcare decisions in a "watchdog" role, increased transparency, the rewarding of physicians for outcomes (pay for performance), for accountability for hospitals, and to simplify entrance into the healthcare system. Lydia state that "nobody really knows what these plans are going to cost us".

However, actual facts and figures came from Gino Pazzaglini, the president and CEO of Seton Health in Troy, N. Y. an integrated system, and a part of Ascension Health, which has national coverage of 72 facilities in 22 states. Gino explained that the budget of his organization was \$145 million in revenue, \$142 million in ex-

"When you pull the lever on November 4... what will happen to your health care?"

penses and \$8 million bad debt. Professionals dominate the budget by 67%. Two-thirds of employees are caregivers and one-third is administrative, which include billing, supplies and equipment, interest payments, insurance and tort. Presently the system is a “legacy from the 60’s” which was hospital based and general -practitioner dominated. Now specialists and sub-specialists do most of the hospital admissions. About half of the physicians now are women, and today’s physicians “want a job with more regular hours”. Patients have migrated to the “out-patient side”, while hospitals provide emergency and intensive care and are paid by DRG’s (diagnostic-related groups), which require that patients be cared for as efficaciously as possible. There are now over 1000 insurance plans and HMO’s. Out of the two-thirds of the uninsured, one out of a family is working. Out of 86 billion spent in health care, 36 billion is paid out-of-pocket, and for the uninsured families, health care is episodic and crisis -care. The poorest 20% of patients paid the most out-of-pocket, the middle -income patients paid the least, and the richest patients paid \$26 less than the poorest!

According to Gino, universal coverage should provide incentives for hospitals and health care providers to be cohesive and preventative. The current system encourages fragmentation. For reform, all health care providers must “be at the table” with an increased demand for primary care and a shortage of the same. A standard package of services should be available with attention to the most vulnerable, dollars for prescriptions and mental health, no exclusions for catastrophic illnesses, the young and healthy MUST be in plans, and health care reform is a shared responsibility.

A lively question and answer period followed!

Thank you to all the following for their untiring efforts to bring this forum together:

Donna Packard-Mahoney and Anne Burton, Rensselaer County League

Courtney Burke, Maggie Moehringer and Marian Swager, Albany County League

Helen Cranshaw and Pat Reed, Saratoga County League

Pat Kessler, Schenectady County League

David Levesque, Word of Mobile, for the web-cast, and

Elisa Streeter, for moderating (great job, Elisa!)

For the complete web-cast of this event, go to www.LWVNY.org and click on issues and advocacy. This topic will remain on the website for the foreseeable future. Other websites to consider for further information: www.healthcare-now.org; info@healthcare-now.org; www.PNHP.org; www.unionsforsinglepayerhr676.org;

So what do you think? Do we need more effort to have government be responsive to the League of Women Voters criteria for healthcare reform?? Contact us to give us your ideas!

Submitted by Anne Burton

**“Courtney
Burke said that
“the Obama
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Massachusetts
Plan.”**

RE-SCHEDULED TROY HOUSING AUTHORITY 2008 TENANT COMMISSIONER ELECTION TO TAKE PLACE ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2008

The election was postponed from Wednesday, August 27th in order to include Section 8 tenants in the process. There are now four candidates for the two tenant commissioner positions. The re-scheduled election will be held from 12 Noon to 8 pm at the various housing sites. We hope that all the monitors who were scheduled for August will be available for the new date. They will be contacted to confirm and sent updated instructions.

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In order to enroll for the digital *National Voter*, you will have to register and login at the LWVUS Web site, www.lwv.org.

The enrollment deadline for the February 2009 issue is January 5, 2009, at 5 pm ET.

After you have registered at www.lwv.org:

- Login following the instructions.
- When you get to your "My League/Welcome" page, click on "(Update your information)" at the bottom of the page.
- Next, scroll to the bottom of the "Your Profile" page, click on the box "I wish to receive *The National Voter* electronically."
- Finally, click on "Submit Changes."

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**All members
of LWV can
receive The
National
Voter**

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF RENSSELAER COUNTY

265 River Street, Troy, NY 12180

Secretary of State Lorraine A. Cortes-Vazquez

Department of State

Dear Secretary of State Cortes-Vasquez:

The League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County was pleased to see that Governor David Paterson asked the Department of State for an assessment of the November 4 election and an analysis of voting processes. It is the desire of our Local League to share comments that we heard related to this voting session.

“We don’t bother getting an absentee ballot because they aren’t even counted until after the election and, so many times, the election is called when so few precincts have even reported.

“Do whatever you can to support ease in voting.”

“We know voting is a states rights issue, but we need support from the federal government so that databases can ‘talk’ to each other to keep them accurate.” It is deplorable that so many names get wrongly removed from voting rolls and require provisional ballots which may or may not get counted.

County practices discourage participation. For example, election inspectors in our county have to work for the whole election day. That limits the pool of candidates. Not many can take a whole day off from work or school.

Planning for election 2009 should start now when the mistakes from 2008 are clear in one’s mind. Perhaps there need to be more paid staff connected to the election.

“Ballot marking device? I didn’t even see one in my voting site. The machine must have been in another room?”

“I didn’t use the ballot marking device because everyone would have known how I voted.”

It is clear that New York state made the right decision in moving discreetly when selecting voting machines under the Help American Vote Act (HAVA). The conversation needs to be continued to broadly expand voter registration, then voting in this state. The League of Women Voters of New York State was very involved in the HAVA meetings in the state. We hope the League will be included in whatever is planned by Governor Paterson to improve voting procedures and increase voter turnout..

Sincerely,

Gail DeMarco Co-President, Diane Bell Co-President



“The conversation needs to be continued to broadly expand voter registration, then voting in this state.”



League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County Calendar for 2008-2009

DECEMBER 2008

3 – Rensselaer County Legislature Open Forum, Wed., 6 pm

3 - Troy Housing Authority Elections

4 – Troy City Council, Thurs., 7 pm

8 - Troy School District Open House, Troy High. Call 328-5070 for times.

9 – Rensselaer County Legislature Monthly Meeting, Tues., 7 pm

JANUARY 2009

7 – Rensselaer County Legislature Open Forum, Wed., 6 pm

8 – Troy City Council, Thurs., 7 pm

8 – LWV of Rensselaer County Monthly Meeting, Thurs., 7 pm (Krause Center, Troy)

12 - Troy School District Open House, Doyle Middle School. Call 328-5070 for times.

13 – Rensselaer County Legislature Monthly Meeting, Tues., 7 pm

14 – LWV of Rensselaer County Post Holiday Party, Wed., 6-9 pm (Krause Center, Troy)

19 – Martin Luther King Day, Mon.



League of Women Voters,
Rensselaer County

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Troy, NY 12180

www.lwvrc.org