

**Special
points of
interest:**

- Charter Schools Panel Oct. 3
- New website
- TV ad on Channel 13: Voting and LWV
- Volunteer for Election Night Reporting

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FINANCING EDUCATION STUDY – CHARTER SCHOOLS

PANEL DISCUSSION

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3RD , 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Krause Center, 2212 Burdett Avenue, Troy

(Across from Samaritan Hospital)

PANEL:

LONNIE PALMER, Superintendent

The Enlarged City School District of Troy

MARY THERESA STRECK, Co-Director

Ark Community Charter School

SETH COHEN, President

Troy Teachers Association

PETER MURPHY, Vice President

New York Charter School Resource Center

- What are charter schools?
- How are they financed?
- How have they functioned in New York State?
- Are they fulfilling their promise of innovation in education and increased student achievement?
- What is their effect on financing education throughout the state?
-

See background information inside.

We will be scheduling a consensus meeting later in October.

Members of the Board 2006-07

Co-President **Margaret Story**
272-1566 mrgstry@aol.com *Public Spokesperson; Receive/Distribute State and National Mailings; Arts Center Mail and Phone Calls; New Member Orientation*

Co-President **Gail K. DeMarco**
434-2413 gdemarco@nycap.rr.com
Board Meetings Agendas/Mail; Maintain Calendar; Board List; New Member Orientation

Vice President **Mary Muller**
274-0846 mullers@mac.com *"Voter" editor; Public Relations; Web Site Transition*

Secretary **Marcia Pl Easterling** 273-5416 measterl@emmawillard.org
Minutes/ Correspondence

Treasurer **Irene S. Wynnyczuk** 2799789 iwynn@nycap.rr.com
Treasurer; Budget Committee; Co-Chair: Membership/Finance Drive; Co-Chair: THA Election

Director **Diane Bell** 2735172 dbell1@nycap.rr.com
Web Site; Voter Services; Local Voter Guides and Local Section NYS Voter Guide; General Meeting Program Coordinator

Director **Anne E. Burton** 283-3499 aburton@usoncology.com
Member Interest Data Base; Member Involvement—All Areas

Director **George W. O'Connor** 2726512 gandt54@verison.net
Membership Records Management; Prospective Member Mailings; Member Directory/Mailing Labels; Chair: Troy Charter Review; Co-Chair: THA Elections

Director **Donna Packard-Mahoney** 283-6423 dmahoney@nycap.rr.com
Action; Issues/Advocacy

Director **Fred D. Stein** 663-5230 Fredd@nycap.rr.com
Chair: Natural Resources; Rensselaer County government; State Prog.: Financing Education

From the CoPresidents

We trust you are enjoying these lovely September days and will join us for League of Women Voters activities this fall.

Go to lwvrc.org to see our new web-site. Many thanks to **Don** and **Diane Bell** and **Mary Muller** for designing the site. Thanks also to **Mary Muller** and **Nina Pattison** for the new format of *The Voter*. The web-site and *The Voter* are important ways to communicate with our members. Please let us know your suggestions.

NYSLWV and the Capital Region Leagues have been working with Channel 13 to produce a series of spots to encourage people to vote and raise awareness about the League. E. Stewart Jones, Jr. (The Jones Firm) has agreed to sponsor one of the spots. **Mary Muller, Irene Wynnyczuk** and **Margaret Story** have represented the Rensselaer LWV on this project. Watch for the spots in September and October.

Irene Wynnyczuk will again be collecting Primary Election results for the Associated Press.

Jane Ducatt expects to receive the assignment sheets for Election Night Reporting soon. If you have a favorite polling place in Troy, Brunswick, Rensselaer or North Greenbush and are willing to report results, let Jane know. This is a fun activity and it's a wonderful way to raise funds for the League. Our work has helped keep our dues low for many years.

Thanks to **Anne Burton, Irene Wynnyczuk, George O'Connor, Jill Nagy, Dinnie Shanley** and **Nina Pattison** helped **Margaret Story** with a table at the Troy Riverfront Farmers Market on August 12. We registered people to vote and distributed copies of Voters Guide I.

Charter Schools will be the topic of our October 3 meeting. **Irene Wynnyczuk** and **Fred Stein** have secured very knowledgeable speakers. The meeting is open to the public. Invite your school administrators, Board of Education members, teachers and friends to attend.

Voting Machine for those with disabilities - there will be one new machine in Rensselaer County at the Board of Elections, 1600 Seventh Ave. in Troy. Call them at 270-2990 for details.
Margaret and Gail

New Website for LWV Rensselaer Chapter

League Members and others in Rensselaer County looking for information on upcoming Chapter activities as well as current facts on local government can find it all on our new, improved website. The new address is

<http://lwwrc.org>

the initials stand for “League of Women Voters, Rensselaer County” We are a non-profit organization, hence the .org appendage. The former website address <http://lwwrenselaer.org> is no longer operating.

Members Don and Diane Bell are responsible for the new look and content of the website, and deserve grateful thanks for the hours of work that went in to constructing it. Comments and suggestions for additional content are most welcome.

Welcome New Members

Mr. and Mrs. William Boyce

2 Benker School Way
Cropseyville, NY
279-3845

David Borton, household member with

Harriet Borton

Ms Daneta Garcia

1248 Schodack Valley Rd.
Castleton-on-Hudson NY
7320408

Richard Zander, household member with

Amy Zander

Deborah Byers, household member with

Francis Pitts

FINANCING EDUCATION STUDY – CHARTER SCHOOLS BACKGROUND

A SUMMARY OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL ACT OF 1998

What is the purpose of the Act?

To improve learning and achievement.

To increase learning opportunities particularly for at-risk students.

To encourage innovation.

To offer parental school choice.

To provide schools with opportunity to change from rule-based accountability to performance-based accountability.

What are charter schools?

Charter schools are self-governing public schools, which operate outside the authority of local school boards. They have greater flexibility than traditional public schools.

How are charter schools created?

An organization or group (other than a private or parochial school or a for-profit corporation) may apply to create a charter school. The organization applies to a chartering agency and will be granted a five-year charter if the application complies with the Act and the applicant demonstrates a reasonable ability to meet or exceed state student performance standards. Applications for charters to serve at-risk students are given priority. The CSA limits the number of charters that may be granted to 100, with 50 to be granted by SUNY and 50 to be granted by the Regents or local Boards of Education (or the Chancellor of the New York City schools). In addition, a traditional public school may convert to a charter by vote of the Board of Education and a majority of parents of students attending the school for which conversion is sought. There is no cap on the number of conversions, and public school conversions do not count toward the cap.

The New York Charter law does not provide for virtual charter schools (schools for home-schooled youngsters.)

Charter schools must be nonsectarian in programs, admissions policies, and employment practices. A charter may not be issued to a school that would be “wholly or in part under the control or direction of any religious denomination or in which any denominational tenant or doctrine would be taught.”

Who may attend a charter school?

Anyone may apply. Lotteries are used if the number of applications is greater than spaces available. A charter school must be nonsectarian, non-discriminatory and cannot charge tuition. Enrolled students may withdraw at any time and return to district schools.

Who may teach at a charter school?

As a general rule, teachers in charter schools must be certified. However, the lesser of five teachers or thirty percent of the teachers at a charter school need not meet New York teacher certification requirements, provided they have at least three years of teaching experience, are members of a college faculty, or have other specialized experience.

Are teachers in charters represented by unions and subject to collective bargaining agreements?

As a general rule, teachers at charters of fewer than 250 students at the date of commencement do not belong to collective bargaining units and are not covered by collective bargaining agreements. However, there is no prohibition to the unionization of charter employees. Charters of over 250 students on the opening day become a separate negotiating unit of the home district’s teachers’ union, subject to the existing collective bargaining agreement. However union membership can be waived for up to 10 schools chartered by SUNY.

How are charter schools funded?

The school district of a student's residence pays the per pupil approved operating expense to the Charter School in 6 installments, beginning July 1 and every 2 months thereafter. In the first year of operation, payments are made on the basis of initial-year enrollment projections for the Charter, with subsequent reconciliation.

Students attending charters are also eligible for the same aids that private school students receive, including transportation, textbooks, library materials, computer software, and health services from the school district of residence.

If the charter implements a disabled student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), the home school district transfers the state and federal special education funds attributable to that student to the charter. This sum is generally less than the true cost to educate a disabled child because the district traditionally supports the education of disabled children with an additional local contribution in addition to the contribution of state and federal funds. New York City has elected to give charters additional monies for the education of disabled children by turning over the local share of funds for disabled students as well as state and federal funds.

In addition, charter schools are eligible to receive both state and federal grants for operational planning and facilities planning and creation. Aside from their eligibility for state and federal grants, charter schools are not eligible to receive state finance for facilities construction or lease.

Many charters receive private grants and donations to fund both facilities and operating expenses. Private donations can significantly increase the *per capita* funding available to some charters.

Is the charter school's day, week, or year the same as that of traditional public schools?

The amount of time children attend charters must be at least as great as the traditional public school calendar. Many charters have an extended day, week, and/or year.

Is a charter school required to meet the performance standards of the Board of Regents?

Yes. Charter schools must participate in the statewide assessment program.

Is there supervision and oversight of the charter schools?

Oversight of charter school performance is provided by the chartering agency, with charters responsible for the filing of annual reports and financial audits. The chartering agency also conducts site visits, at which it monitors contractual compliance (the school's compliance with the terms of its charter). The State Education Department is responsible for regulatory compliance (compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, such as laws for provision of services to students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency).

How may a charter be revoked or terminated by non-renewal of the charter?

The CSA has clear standards for revocation of charters. There is no standard in the CSA, which requires a minimum level of academic achievement for charter renewal. Although both SUNY and the Regents purport to apply achievement standards in the decision to renew a charter, these standards are not written and have, upon occasion, been overruled by political considerations to renew the charters of underperforming schools.

WE NEED YOUR HELP IN RECRUITING ...

- New Members

Potential Contributors to League Education Projects

We will be sending out our annual new member/finance drive letter in October. If you have a friend, neighbor, or co-worker who you think would be interested in joining or supporting the League, please send names, addresses, phone numbers to:

Irene Wynnychuk, 11 Diana Lane, Troy, NY 12180 or e-mail – iwynn@nycap.rr.com

WILL YOUR VOTE COUNT?

A Discussion about Proposed New Voting Systems

Showing: “Bought and Sold” – 45 minute film

Panel Discussion

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH, 2:00 – 4:00 PM

EAST GREENBUSH LIBRARY

The LWV of Rensselaer County will co-sponsor this meeting with ARISE (A Regional Initiative Supporting Empowerment). This is a four-county coalition of over thirty congregations and community groups dedicated to improving communities and strengthening the political voice of people of faith and conscience.

Citizen input in the decision process is urgent now!

Rensselaer County League of Women Voters City of Troy Governance Project

At the annual meeting held on May 24, 2006, the members present adopted the Recommended 2006-2007 Local Program which included the following element:

"We will support and advocate for ...
"C. Those organizational structural and staffing procedures of Troy's City Government that assure their conformity with the requirements of the Troy City Charter. Where there are disparities, the need for changes in practice and/or in the Charter would be indicated."

This element of our program is the result of various discussions among our members regarding the apparent disregard of the requirements of the Troy City Charter as they relate to the staffing of administrative positions of department heads.

At the candidate's forum held prior to the most recent election of City Council members, the candidates seeking "at large" seats were asked to present their views on this issue. Those candidates seeking reelection acknowledged awareness of the problem and generally agreed that something needed to be done to correct it.

In reviewing both the City Charter and the Annual Budget data for 2006 which appear on the City's web site, it is apparent that some corrective steps need to be taken to bring the structure of local government into compliance with the current Charter or a major charter revision needs to be adopted.

As we examine this problem and the approaches to solving it, we need to give due consideration to both the fiscal issues (filling required positions) and the quality of municipal management issues.

It is proposed that we convene a group of interested Troy members to discuss our next steps for presenting this issue to the Mayor and the City Council and to the citizens of Troy.

League members who are interested in working on this project over the coming year are asked to contact George O'Connor (phone 272-6512, or email gandt@verizon.net).

"Some corrective steps need to be taken to bring the structure of local government into compliance with the Charter"

Letters to the Editor: Let's Discuss

We all agree that openness and communication is a good thing, right? Please consider sharing your opinions and observations with your fellow League members here in the Voter. Simply email or mail your letters, essays, poetry to The Voter Editor, c/o Mary Muller, 207 Second Street, Troy, NY 12180 or to mullers@mac.com



**League of Women Voters
Rensselaer County**

265 River Street
Troy, NY 12180

<http://lwwrc.org>



CALENDAR OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2006

October 2006

- 3 **Fall Membership Meeting , Education Forum, Tue., Krause Ctr.**
- 4 Rensselaer County Legislature, Open Forum, Wednesday, 6 pm
- 5 Troy City Council, Thurs., 7 pm
- 9 Columbus Day, Mon.
- 10 Rensselaer County Legislature, Monthly Meeting, Tues., 6 pm
- 12 Board Meeting, ., 7 pm, (Krause Center)

NOVEMBER 2006

- 1 Rensselaer County Legislature, Open Forum, Wednesday, 6 pm
- 2 Troy City Council, Thurs., 7 pm
- 7 ELECTION DAY, TUES., 6 AM-9 PM
- 7 **ELECTION NIGHT REPORTING, 8:45-9:15 PM**
- 7 Rensselaer County Legislature, Monthly Meeting, Tues., 6 pm
- 9 Board Meeting,., 7 pm, (Krause Center)
- 11 Veterans Day, Sat...
- 23 Thanksgiving Day, Thurs.