



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

OCTOBER 2006

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www.lwvtompkins.14850.com

MEMBERSHIP

A warm welcome to some new members:

Helen Cooil 26 Eagle's Head Road
539-6870

Ilma Levine 71 Brooktondale Road
277-3409

We regret to report that Helen Engst is leaving our ranks after many years of faithful support. We wish her well.

We really appreciate the fact that almost all members have paid their dues by now and, of course, many thanks for the additional contributions.

Please, use the green flyer to give to a friend or any other person interested in joining the League.

Our last membership meeting in September was a lively one with ca. 25 people attending. We all enjoyed the desserts that board members had baked and contributed. Thank you so much! Our district attorney, Gwen Wilkinson, made an impassioned speech about domestic abuse and the problems she has in combating it and helping protect victims. According to her there should be a change in the law that would make abuse a crime, thereby giving judges the tool to punish abusers effectively. Heather Campbell of the Advocacy Center also spoke, pointing out the enormous difficulties abused women and families have, but also mentioning some of the help they can get through the Center. It was a thought-provoking event.

Maria Eisner

CANDIDATES FORUM

October 26, 7:00—9:00 pm

**Ithaca Town Hall
215 N. Tioga St.**

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HOW ARE THE CHILDREN: A COMMUNITY SHARING

November 9, 7:00—9:00 pm

**GIAC
318 N. Albany St.**

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HOW ARE THE CHILDREN: A COMMUNITY SHARING

"How Are the Children: A Community Sharing" is the theme of a program open to the public on **Thursday, Nov. 9** from **7-9 p.m.** at the **Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC), 319 N. Albany St., Ithaca.** It is organized by Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga, in collaboration with several of the Catholic parishes in Tompkins County, with cosponsorship by a number of community groups.

"Children at Risk" is one of the public policy priorities for the organizers, with a particular focus on ensuring that adequate funding is provided in the NY State budget for issues faced by these children. The program parallels and expands on a similar LWVTC program last March on "Children in Poverty," sponsored by the League's study group that has been considering how children in Tompkins County are faring.

Main areas for consideration in the November 9 program are housing, food security, child care and children's mental health. Keynote speaker will be Marcia Fort, GIAC director, with moderator George Ferrari of the Community Foundation. Resource persons representing the main focus areas will be discussing key concerns and potential advocacy actions along with audience participation and small group discussions. League members are encouraged to attend.

BRIEFINGS ON THE STATUS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AROUND THE WORLD

This is the title of a conference to be held at the United Nations in NY City on Wednesday, November 15, 2006 from 9 am - 3:30 pm in association with the LWVNYS. The fee for League members is \$55. To register, contact the LWVNYS at 518-465-4162, e-mail to lwvny@lwvny.org, or call me for more details.

Maria Eisner 277-4404.

CANDIDATES FORUM

Thursday, October 26, 7:00-9:00 pm
Ithaca Town Hall, 215 N. Tioga St.

Program:

Welcome and Introductions

Tee Ann Hunter, LWV-TC President

Forum Format and Timekeepers

Marnie Johnson, Moderator

Opening Statements (2 min.)

All Candidates

Questions

Audience

Closing Statement (1 min if time allows)

All Candidates

Informal conversation with the candidates

Light refreshments served

Candidates:

NYS Assembly, 125th District

Barbara Lifton (Democrat)

James Rohan (Republican)

Tompkins County Sheriff

Timothy Little (Citizens for a Safe
Tompkins County)

Peter Meskill (Democrat)

Brian P. Robison (Republican,
Citizens for Change)

Tompkins County Clerk

Aurora Valenti (Democrat,
Republican)

TV Broadcasts on Channel 13:

Wednesday, November 1 at 1:30 pm

Thursday, November 2 at 9:00 am

Saturday, November 4 at 8:00 pm

VOTING MACHINES: A CALL FOR ACTION

Dolores Saltzman points out that there are petitions for acquiring voting machines in NY State that incorporate ballot scanners and a printed record of the ballot, the kind the LWV is advocating. The petitions are lying out at the Democratic Headquarters at 371 Elmira Road, 772-5390, across the street from McDonalds. Dolores is urging everybody to go there and sign the petition, 12 - 6 on Mondays through Fridays and 10 - 12 on Saturdays.

IBCA WALKATHON ON OCTOBER 28!

The 13th Annual Walkathon of the **Ithaca Breast Cancer Alliance** will be held Saturday, October 28, 2006. The theme of this year's event is "Access to Care" to highlight that too many people have difficulty obtaining the care that they so vitally need. The Alliance needs walkers and sponsors.

Festive pre-walk activities, including a new children's tent, will take place on the Ithaca Commons from 10:00 am until 1:00 pm. The walk will take place between 1 and 2 p.m. and the event concludes with a wrap-up party from 2 till 3 pm.

Volunteers are needed to help with the Walkathon. Please call IBCA at 277-0960 or e-mail to <mailto:info@ibca.net>info@ibca.net. We'd love to have you!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 200607

LWV NYS website
LWV US website
LWV-Tompkins County

leave message at 273-8350

www.lwvny.org
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FINANCING EDUCATION

Our study on financing education is continuing. The first part dealt with how NY State is raising money (where the revenues come from, how they are assessed and where they are going) to provide all its students with an adequate education. We reached consensus in the spring of 2006; find out about it at www.lwvny.org. In the second part, our present study, the underlying question is whether the League is in favor of amending the NY State Charter Schools Act. For a definition of charter schools, please, see your September Bulletin. The League has no position on charter schools but was opposed to the original Charter School Act of 1998 because it would mean less money available for public schools, inadequate separation of church and state and inadequate provision for disabled students.

There are ca. 4,000 public school in NY State serving 2.8 million students; over 1,000 schools and 1 million students are in NY City. 100 charter schools account for ca. 2.5% of the student body. Most charter students are in elementary school, over 2/3 are black, under 1/6 white. Many more students are in the lower income category, but fewer disabled students go to charter schools. Most charter schools are in NY City (57), 14 in Buffalo, 8 in Albany, 4 in Rochester. There is no agreement and no definitive study that would indicate that charter schools are more successful than public schools; some are failures, others are successes.

1. The first specific question in our study deals with the agencies in charge of granting, overseeing, renewing and revoking charters. Currently these agencies are the Board of Regents (administered by NYS Dep. of Education), SUNY and the home school district. Should there be only one besides the home school district? The Regents and SUNY have different standards. Having two agencies doing the same job is more expensive. The Regents seem to be leaning toward the Democratic side, SUNY to the Republican side. The standards are not clearly defined. Should there be more stringent oversight and should we insist on higher average in achievement and educational quality? But how does one compare achieve-

ment. Is the student population comparable? Is the time for testing long enough?

2. Should the financial impact of charter schools on their home district be limited? NY State is among the highest spenders for K-12 education. Taxpayers should be free to choose the schools that serve their children best. Is a "dedicated statewide funding stream" called for? Should payments be based on enrollment or attendance? What about capital construction and renovation services for charter schools? Should there be a percentage limit on the funding charter schools receive from home districts? Should we have to pay more taxes? Maybe charter schools should be funded quite differently?

3. Do we favor a limit on the number of charter schools in NY and of students attending? If the number of charter school students exceeds a certain level, the financial impact may affect district programs. Their failure rate is 25%, but they offer educational opportunities not available in public schools

4. Should the League support measures that would limit the percentage of children in a district that could attend charter schools. What about midyear change-over? Too high a change-over to charter schools during the year could take too much financial support out of the public school budget and cause instability in the student population. But what about parents' decisions and indecisions?

5. We are asked whether support of publicly funded research is justified in order to determine a possible relationship between charter school characteristics and student academic success.

6. Will the League support an amended Charter School Act? This is the most important question and all the previous considerations should lead to the answer to this one.

The next Bulletin will bring the consensus questions. As is apparent, this study deals with a highly complicated subject. So, please, plan to come to our consensus meeting on **November 20 at 7 p.m. at the Women's Community Building.**

Maria Eisner

CANDIDATES' ANSWERS

The New York State LWV has solicited answers to several questions, from candidates for both state and federal offices. The results are all available at the SmartVoter website:

<http://www.smartvoter.org/ny/state/>

We give here the responses of the major candidates for the senatorial and gubernatorial races.

Gubernatorial:

1) In spite of school tax rebates, income tax credits for school age children and increased STAR rebates, property taxes continue to rise for most New York homeowners. What do you propose to curb this rate of escalation that is fair and equitable to all property owners?

Jon Faso: My plan caps the allowable growth in local school taxes, reforms mandates that drive up local spending without improving education, and consolidates non-educational functions like payroll processing at the BOCES level. I would double the current STAR exemptions, if we enact a tax cap and mandate relief.

Eliot Spitzer: My property tax relief program would provide \$6 billion in relief over 3 years, concentrated on the middle-class New Yorkers who need it most. Our 3-year \$11 billion savings plan would pay for this program and leave sufficient additional savings to pay for other critical spending items I have proposed.

2) Will you support the establishment of an independent commission on redistricting? Please explain your answer.

Eliot Spitzer: Yes. Having the Legislature draw the district lines for their own elections is a classic conflict of interest. It has significantly reduced electoral competition and it runs counter to our basic democratic principles. We must end this conflict of interest by transferring redistricting authority to an independent, non-partisan commission.

John Faso: I support redistricting reforms that promote transparency in the process and include statutory standards that take into account existing communities of interest and jurisdictional boundaries. As governor, I would veto any plan that is a partisan gerrymander regardless of which party benefits.

3) What role do you see wind power, ethane and other renewable energy sources playing in alleviating the high cost of energy in New York State?

John Faso: Maintaining and promoting a diverse energy supply helps safeguard against future shortfalls in individual energy sources and reduces our dependency on foreign oil. Renewable energies play a vital role in diversification. We must also reauthorize the Article X process to speed development of new energy generating facilities.

Eliot Spitzer: Investing in clean, renewable energy to reduce pollution and energy costs — and to diversify our energy supply — is a key part of my energy plan. On June 25, David Paterson presented our comprehensive clean energy proposal. However, for wind projects, we must respect communities' concerns about turbine siting.

Answers for all gubernatorial candidates may be found at:

<http://www.smartvoter.org/2006/11/07/ny/state/race/nygvrrn/questions.html>

Senatorial:

1) The American occupation in Iraq continues to be enormously costly in dollars and in lives. What is your position on how our government should proceed?

Hillary Clinton: I have spoken out at length regarding the difficult and dangerous situation we confront in Iraq. I have consistently and persistently criticized the Administration's handling of the war. This complicated issue cannot be oversimplified. I refer you to the many speeches and statements I have made regarding this issue.

John Spencer: Having served in a war, no one is more committed to bringing our troops home as soon as possible. Our elected representatives, including Senator Clinton, committed us to the war in Iraq. We cannot cut and run. Iraq must be stabilized or it will become a breeding ground for terrorist activities.

2) What is your impression of the roll-out of the Medicare Prescription Drug program so far, and what changes would you propose to make it better?

John Spencer: It is a good start but there is more that can be done to protect our taxpayers and particularly our seniors. We need to streamline benefits and ensure that low-income or fixed income seniors get the help they deserve. No Medicare beneficiary should ever leave a pharmacy without their prescription.

Hillary Clinton: While I voted against the bill, I have been working hard to fix the problems plaguing the Medicare prescription drug program. I have co-sponsored legislation to reduce the complexity and fix the donut hole, and released a guide, in English and Spanish, to help New Yorkers navigate the transition.

3) Where do you stand on the current balance between security and civil rights?

Hillary Clinton: The President must be able to pursue terrorists, defend our national security with the best technology available, and act within the law. If the President feels he needs more flexibility he should engage Congress so that we can craft laws that both protect our citizens' safety and uphold our Constitution.

John Spencer: It is paramount that we keep our Country safe. The greatest threat to our liberty is the threat of terrorism. Violent terrorists wear no uniform and don't play by the rules. I fully support the Patriot Act and NSA wiretapping of suspected terrorists to prevent another attack on U.S. soil.

Answers for all senatorial candidates may be found at:

<http://www.smartvoter.org/2006/11/07/ny/state/race/ussen/questions.html>

LWVTC CALENDAR—2006-07

(Please note *italicized* changes from September Bulletin!!)

October 26	CANDIDATES' FORUM: LOCAL OFFICES	Ithaca Town Hall	7:00
October 13	Last day to register for the November election!		
November 6	Board Meeting (Debbie Levin)		7:30
November 7	General Election		6 am to 9pm
November 20	CONSENSUS MEETING: CHARTER SCHOOLS	Wm's Com. Bldg.	7:00
December 2	Board Meeting (Maria Eisner)		9:30AM
January 1	Board Meeting (Old Courthouse)		7:30
January 23	MARY RUSSEL—REDISTRICTING	Women's Community Building	7:00
February 5	Board Meeting (Old Courthouse)		7:30
February 24	BRUNCH WITH LAREN SIGNER	Women's Community Building	12:00
March 5	Board Meeting (Old Courthouse)		7:30
March 27	??CONSENSUS MEETING OR "READING BUDGETS"??	TBA	7:00
April 9	Board Meeting (Kathy Burlitch)		7:30
April 24	ANNUAL MEETING:	TBA	7:00
May 7	Board Meeting (Charlotte Coffman)		7:30
June 4	Board Meeting (Tee-Ann Hunter)		7:30

See our calendar at <http://lwvtompkins.14850.com/#calendar> for more dates of interest to voters.

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YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS**SENATORS:**

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