



# **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY**

**NOVEMBER 2006**

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**MEMBERSHIP: MARIA EISNER 277-4404**

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## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Ithaca Times dedicated 3 full pages of its October 25 issue to the LWV-TC, including the front page with a photograph of 5 of our board members, Tee-Ann Hunter, Mary Berkelman, Kathy Burlitch, Libby deProse and Maria Eisner. We hope you all had a chance to see it as well as the article in the Ithaca Journal on Saturday, November 11th. We appreciate getting some exposure in our community. Maybe it will help us recruit new members and solicit contributions to our Education Fund.

The candidates' forum on October 20 came off very well. Thanks to Charlotte's and Bette's efforts it was flawlessly organized. Many League members helped with receiving the candidates and the public, moderating, timing, recording, serving refreshments, and more. All deserve our thanks. The meeting was attended by the two candidates for NYS assembly, Barbara Lifton and James Rohan, three candidates for sheriff, the TC County clerk, Aurora Valenti, and an audience of ca. 70 people, a very good turnout.

We welcome two new members:

Ms. Judith Crispell 125 Main Street, Dryden,  
13053

Ms. Martha T. Hamblin 305 Fairmount Ave.

I am always happy to hear about people who are interested in the League. Our meetings are open to the public, so prospective League members can always be invited. Other than the consensus meeting on November 20th, there are no more events planned for this year, but some

interesting ones are scheduled for 2007. Please give me names, addresses and phone numbers. I will take it from there.

Maria Eisner 277-4404.

## **Financing Education: Consensus Meeting**

### **Part II Charter Schools**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Monday, November 20, 2006  
Women's Community Building**

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## **Financing Education Consensus, Part II Charter Schools**

**7 p.m., Monday, November 20, 2006  
Women's Community Building**

Tompkins County does not have any charter schools, but in many parts of New York State, especially in urban areas, charter schools are a very attractive alternative for parents dissatisfied with traditional public education. PLEASE come to our consensus meeting on November 20. We hope to have a large turnout to help our committee reach consensus on this important issue.

For additional background information, refer to the LWV of Tompkins County Bulletins for September and October, and the LWVNY Voter.

Less than seven years after New York's passage of charter school enabling legislation the movement remains one infused with more heat than illumination. Opponents charge that charters are destroying the public education system, which has fostered this country's greatness through its ability to provide an educated workforce inculcated with core democratic values. Conversely, proponents claim charters are the only hope for public education, which admittedly has failed large numbers of children. What is apparent is that some charters are spectacularly successful, some are abject failures, and many have been unable to produce results appreciably different from those of traditional public schools. Moreover, there is distressingly little research about what separates successful from unsuccessful charters. Without this type of research, one of the basic purposes of charters, allowing for educational experimentation into more effective ways to educate children traditionally left behind by public schools, will remain unfulfilled. While we know little about what makes a charter school work, the demand, as measured by applications for new charters and waiting lists for existing ones, increases; and it is very likely

that the cap on charter schools will be increased within the next year and perhaps within the next few months. Because the League currently has no position that would allow it to address many of the issues facing charter schools and because the political reality is that charter schools are unlikely to disappear in the near future, we elected not to use the study to decide whether the charter school movement is good or bad for New York State public education. Rather, its purpose is to explore how the legislation might be strengthened, so that the reality of charters can begin to match the rhetoric. We hope to develop a nuanced position that will enable the League to advocate for stronger schools as part of its Financing Education position. (From the LWVNY Charter Schools Discussion Leaders' Guide)

Consensus questions should be answered NO — PROBABLY NOT — UNSURE — PROBABLY — YES. Please bring these questions with you to the meeting.

### **I. Amendment of the New York State Charter School Act**

Should the New York State Charter School Act be amended?

### **II. State Grant and Oversight of Charters**

A. Should authority of agencies (other than the home school district) to grant, to oversee, to renew and to revoke charters be limited to a single entity? (Currently both the Regents and SUNY can do this.)

B. Should the League advocate for more stringent oversight of charter compliance in the renewal/revocation of charters?

C. Should the League support greater emphasis on positive educational outcomes in the renewal of charters?

D. Should the League support educational achievement equal to or better than those of comparable district schools as a precondition for charter renewal?

### III. Financial Impact of Charter Schools

(You may support or oppose multiple measures in III. A - G)

A. Should the League support limiting the financial impact of charter schools on their home districts?

B. Should the League support a dedicated statewide funding stream?

C. Should the League support a dedicated statewide funding stream for students attending charter schools who previously attended private or parochial schools, or were home-schooled?

D. Should the League support transition assistance to district schools?

E. Should the League support home district payment to charters based on the same standard used to pay operating aid to school districts? (Districts receive State operating aid based on average daily attendance, while charter schools receive payment from home districts based on enrollment.)

F. Should charter schools be eligible for capital construction and renovation services and reimbursement of capital expenditures? (A yes vote would mean we support public financing for charter school buildings.)

G. Should the League support separate levels of reimbursement for elementary and secondary education to charter schools based on what the home district spends for the level of schooling provided?

H. Should the League support measures that would limit the percentage of a district's school budget that could be paid to charter schools?

### IV. Limit on Number of Charter Schools and of Students Attending Charter

(You may support or oppose multiple measures in IV. A - D.)

A. Should the League support an amendment to the Charter School Act so that a new Charter could be reissued to another chartering entity upon closure of a charter school? (Currently, when a charter school closes, the closed school is still counted toward the total number of charters. If this amendment passes, the charter could be reissued so that the closed charter schools would no longer be counted toward the maximum number of charters that could be issued.)

B. Should the League support a limitation of the number of charters issued in New York State?

C. Should any increase in the cap be tied to increased accountability for educational quality?

D. Should any increase in the cap be tied to transition assistance for district schools?

E. Should any increase in the cap be tied to creation of a dedicated funding stream?

### V. Selection and Retention of Students

A. Should the League support measures that would limit the percentage of children in a district that could attend charters?

B. Should the League support measures to prevent mid-year departures?

### VI. Research on Charter Schools

A. Should the League support public funding of academic research about the possible correlation between charter school characteristics and student academic success?

Variables for investigation might include:

1. Length of school day, week, year;
2. Per student expenditures (look at public and private revenue sources);
3. Education Management Organizations: for profit vs. not-for-profit Education Management Organizations (EMOs); EMOs vs. non EMOs; district conversion vs. new schools;
4. Rates of teacher and administrator certification and retention;
5. Class size;
6. School size;
7. Student selection mechanism and retention;
8. Demographics of student body;
9. Size of district and location within State;
10. Stand-alone facilities vs. shared facilities;
11. Other.

B. Should the League support public funding to measure educational growth in individual students as they progress from grade to grade in charter schools? (The NY State Education Department is requiring traditional districts to adopt data systems that will enable them to measure value added to an individual student's achievement over time.

### LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2006-07

LWV NYS website  
LWV US website  
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leave message at 273-8350

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**LWV FORUM FOR LOCAL CANDIDATES**

More than 60 people attended the Candidates Forum on Thursday, October 26 for candidates running for New York State Assembly 125th District, Tompkins County Sheriff, and Tompkins County Clerk. The forum was held at Ithaca Town Hall, 215 North Tioga Street, Ithaca, New York from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. The taped event was shown on Channel 13 on November 1, 2, and 4. Thanks are due the following league members who assisted with the forum:

Moderator - Marnie Johnson  
 Videographer - Rebecca Elgie  
 Publicity - Kathy Burlitch  
 Website - Linda Duttweiler  
 Question screeners - Maria Eisner and Kay Sharpe  
 Timers - Kathy Burlitch and Libby deProsse  
 Greeters - Mary Berkelman and Pat Long

Program - Charlotte Coffman  
 Candidate contact and invitations - Bette Winkler and Charlotte Coffman  
 Name tags - Joyce Putnam  
 Refreshments - Germain Colvin  
 Introductions - Tee-Ann Hunter

Just in time for this year's election, the League of Women Voters of New York State introduced a new website called Smart Voter:

**[www.smartvoter.org/ny/state](http://www.smartvoter.org/ny/state)**

Based on a similar and successful website used in California for a decade, the Smart Voter website offers information from the voter guides as well as information and frequent updates from the candidates themselves. The website is free for candidates and voters. The aim is to expand and improve the website for future elections.

Charlotte Coffman, Co-chair, Voter Service

**LWVTC CALENDAR—2006-07**

November 20	<b>CONSENSUS MEETING: CHARTER SCHOOLS</b>	Wm's Com. Bldg.	7:00
December 2	Board Meeting (Maria Eisner)		9:30AM
January 2	Board Meeting (Old Courthouse)		7:30
January 23	<b>MARY RUSSELL—REDISTRICTING</b>	Women's Community Building	7:00
February 5	Board Meeting (Old Courthouse)		7:30
February 24	<b>BRUNCH WITH LAUREN SIGNER</b>	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	<b>ANNUAL MEETING:</b>	TBA	7:00
May 7	Board Meeting (Charlotte Coffman)		7:30
June 4	Board Meeting (Tee-Ann Hunter)		7:30

**YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS****SENATORS:**

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