

LEAGUE UPDATE

PRINCETON AREA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Volume 23, Issue 2

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FROM THE CO-CHAIR'S DESK

KUDOS TO:

- ❖ Ruth Ann Mitchell for her terrific initiative and informative program on Open Government
- ❖ Chrystal Schivell and Rita Ludlum for their successful registration campaign
- ❖ Town Topics for its terrific profile of member Ingrid Reed
- ❖ Joan Waite who gave a beautiful travelogue in song at the Universal Unitarian congregation with proceeds to the Crisis Ministry of Princeton and Trenton
- ❖ All the busy people who managed to make it to our Back to League meeting September 28
- ❖ Assembly woman Linda Greenstein who made it to our Open Government panel in time to tell the audience of her start in politics and the LWV's part in it

Thank you all!

We're proud that you are members of the LWV and our beloved community.

Finally, as membership chair, I would like to ask you all to be alert for new people in your neighborhood who might enjoy being a member of the League. If you give me their name, I will send them an invitation to join. You don't have to address them yourself. Thank you.

As some of you may remember from past Updates, references have been made to a coming 75th Anniversary celebration in November. The bad news is that it isn't going to happen this year. The good news is that we will take our time and plan a really good one for the future. This has been too busy a year to attempt something that needs careful planning and a committee of more than two or three. The hoped-for chair and volunteers didn't materialize. If you have material that we can use in future such as mementoes, or memories and/or would like to help with future planning, feel free to contact Rita Ludlum, Beverly Kestenis, or me.

We have some interesting programs in the planning stage and will welcome your ideas for substantive and interesting additional ones. I still want to find a few members to organize a book/discussion club on International Affairs using some of our writer-members as a start. Let me know soon if this interests you and we will have an organizational caucus to see what's desired.

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Frieda Gilvarg

2008-09 Committee of the Whole

Co-Chairs: Frieda Gilvarg and Rita Ludlum
Treasurer: Ellen Kemp
Voter Services: Chrystal Schivell
Secretary: Carole Krauthammer

Update Editor: Beverly Kestenis
Member At Large: Edith, Neimark,
Anne Zeman, Ruth Ann Mitchell

LATEST VOTER SERVICES INFORMATION

From Chrystal Schivell

Voter Registration

On Saturday, October 20, in conjunction with LWVNJ's statewide drive, LWVPA registered over 60 voters and handed out additional registration forms and absentee ballot applications. Nineteen members volunteered to staff tables at McCaffrey's, Labyrinth Books, and the Montgomery and West Windsor Farmers' Markets - an excellent turnout. LWVPA participated in the Princeton Public Library and Princeton Youth Project's "Rock the Vote" the previous evening. In addition, Joan Bharucha has devoted numerous Saturdays this summer and fall to registering voters at the West Windsor Farmers' Market.

Candidates' Forums

Anne Zeman is hosting a Candidates' Night in South Brunswick, and Rita Ludlum is in charge of a Meet and Greet in Montgomery.

Voters' Guides

Instead of hosting a Candidates' Night in Princeton, where only one seat is contested, Chrystal Schivell, armed with questions generated by Sheila Berkelhammer, approached Town Topics and The Princeton Packet for space for a traditional Voters' Guide. The Packet's response was enthusiastic. Later this month, it will publish Guides to candidates for Montgomery Township Committee as well as Princeton Borough Council. Furthermore, Fred Tuccillo, managing editor, is proposing a continued, expanded collaboration. Possibilities include Voters' Guides for all elections (school board, primaries, and contested and uncontested seats) as well as a special League page posted on The Packet website with links to our own site.

The Committee of the Whole is excited about the opportunity not only to get information out to voters but also to publicize the League. Chrystal is willing to do the secretarial tasks. The success of the collaboration depends, however, on the League's ability to generate good questions about the issues in each municipality shared by The Packet and LWVPA.

Chrystal is appealing to all members:

Please let me know NOW by email or phone whether I can call on you next spring for ideas for questions. If the League is to uphold its part of the collaboration with The Packet, I need a committee of issues-oriented members from Princeton, West Windsor, Montgomery, Plainsboro, and Rocky Hill. It would be ideal if someone has been following county government as well. I googled and found a LWVPA Guide to candidates for Mercer County Freeholder from 2000 but nothing since.

The work can be done by phone or email. All I need is your brain. That gripe session you had with your neighbor about some change in your community could become the basis for a question to a candidate. You may have friends or neighbors who'll help. This collaboration is a chance to revitalize the League and its unique voter service. But if I am to reply enthusiastically to The Packet, I must know that I have the LWVPA membership behind me. Thank you. chrystal.schivell@verizon.net

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Princeton Area League in conjunction with the Princeton Public Library held a panel discussion and public forum on October 11. Panelists included Heather Taylor, communications director and registered lobbyist for the Center for Civic Responsibility and its Citizens' Campaign; Beth Mason, president of the New Jersey Foundation for Open Government and a Hoboken Councilwoman; Tamara D. Garaffa, community information officer for Montgomery Township and Assemblywoman Linda R. Greenstein, deputy speaker of the New Jersey Assembly. Ruth Ann Mitchell served as moderator.

A recurrent theme of the panel was that **good communication** is a key to good governance. Everyone should have the opportunity to contact their elected officials. An internet site such as the one used in Montgomery and illustrated by Tamara Garaffa is a very effective way of accessing information from the local government. Voting information, agendas, master plan reports, departmental reports, calendars, and budgets are all accessible. People may request access to government records and make copies. . . With the strain on local budgets websites should be an effective way to disperse information to the community.

According to Beth Mason a key means of change is **transparency**. It is absolutely critical to take control over situations. The Foundation's mission is to increase the accountability and honesty in all levels of government while still insuring privacy rights. People who had been politically active in their youth are now entering a retirement phase of their life with a renewed interest and increased personal involvement in government. Law changes consisting of the Open Public Record Act, Open Public Meetings Act, and State Archival Records statutes all insure citizens' timely access. Several people in the audience asked questions about their specific problems and Beth explained the steps needed to find their solutions. She also referred people to the website wethepeoplereports.com. As Supreme Court Justice Lewis Brandeis said, "Sunshine is the best disinfectant."

Heather Taylor discussed citizen responsibility and options. For example, she traced the grass roots effort that led to the "pay to play" law. Citizens may do many things. They may serve on boards and commissions and insist on the recording of such. They could join a municipal party committee on the county or state level. They could recruit more response teams such as first aid, EMT, CERT. Even younger people could get involved in these areas. The website for her organization is njfog.org.

Linda Greenstein concluded the day's program by telling the story of how she became involved in politics beginning with running for the local school board. Her key piece of advice, which could most likely be shared by the other panelists, was – **Persistence**.

BACK TO THE LEAGUE NIGHT

Despite Princeton's busy social calendar, a small group of local League members and guests attended the September "Back to League Night" at Township Hall. Featured speakers were Anne Meise and Anne Ruach Nicholas from the NJ State League office. Recruitment of new members was a prominent theme. Since the League's line of separation has been loosened, suggestions were made to achieve this during voter registration and at candidates' forums. Something as simple as leaving membership flyers on chairs could be effective. Branches should target recent retirees who may be eager to become involved. It also may be easier to bridge the generation gap if many younger newcomers join together. For League programs the state office offers "Program in a Box" with a DVD and discussion questions.

Anne Nicholas discussed voter protection and the ways the State League seeks to make voting easier and to deal with voter intimidation. The two most frequently asked questions are: 1. Where is my Polling Place, and 2. Am I registered? Answers can be found on the "Am I Registered" section at www.lwvnj.org. The problem of poll workers dispersing bad information can be solved by better poll worker training. Other problems were questions about the registering of college students, a scarcity of materials at the polling places, and voting machine failures. As we draw closer to the elections, more volunteers are needed at the state office to answer phones. If interested, call or e-mail the state office. After the meeting members mingled and asked further questions of the speakers.

Beverly Kestenis