

# LEAGUE UPDATE

## PRINCETON AREA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Volume 22 Issue 3

July 2008

### Annual Business Meeting

At its June 2007 annual meeting, the Princeton Area League adopted a new organizational plan, i.e., instead of a president/vice-president arrangement, the Princeton League will function managed by a Committee of the Whole. For the 2008-2009 year this plan will continue with most committee members continuing their roles.

Co-Chairs: Frieda Gilvarg and Rita Ludlum  
Treasurer: Ellen Kemp  
Update Editor: Beverly Kestenis  
Member at large: Edith Neimark  
Member at Large: Anne Zeman  
Member at Large: Ruth Anne Mitchell

New members of the Board are:

Secretary: Carole Krauthammer  
Co-chair of Voters Service: Crystal Schivell (with Rita Ludlum)

Voters' Service Report- We registered voters at: two public libraries, YWCA Newcomers club, a corporate headquarters, and at the West Windsor Farmers Market (Joan Bharucha almost every Saturday morning). Candidates Forums were held for Princeton Borough and Township, co-sponsored with Town Topics; for West Windsor School board elections, co-sponsored. We participated in a Forum for the 14<sup>th</sup> State Legislative District (West Windsor and South Brunswick/Kingston, part of our Area League and in the 14<sup>th</sup> District).

Immigration- At the end of the 2006-2008 year cycle, National League concluded a two year study on Immigration. Although Princeton League did not field an Immigration Study Committee, a small group joined the Lawrenceville Study Committee and participated in the Immigration Consensus. The resulting position on Immigration adopted by National as a result of the study is printed in the June issue of the National Voter magazine that you recently received. State League has now set up a Committee for Action headed by former state President, Deborah McMillan. They have had two meetings; a third is coming up on July 19<sup>th</sup>. If anyone is interested in joining this committee, contact Rita Ludlum (759-3313) or the State League Office.

Rita Ludlum

\*Be sure to visit our website to see pictures of attendees at this meeting.

[www.princetonol.com/groups/lwv](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/lwv) or ( [www.princetonol.com](http://www.princetonol.com) and go to the community groups listing and click on the League.)

## LEAGUE FEATURED IN PHS EXHIBIT

The Princeton League will be represented in the Historical Society's September exhibit "Stand Up, Speak Out, Princeton Citizens find their voice." At the final League meeting of the year details were presented by Eileen Morales, the curator at the Princeton Historical Society, who gave a preview of the four part exhibit which will include the voting movements for women, African Americans, and young people, as well as the voting problems of today.

The right of women to vote has been a long, hard struggle. The Declaration of Independence, while claiming all men are created equal, did not give voting equality to all. In nineteenth century New Jersey only free, white males voted, excluding many from a say in their daily life. The 1848 Seneca Falls convention explored what the roles and rights of women should be resulting in a "Declaration of Equality". Their findings were ridiculed in the press and by the public. In the early 1900's women took political action by direct lobbying and non violent action. In 1915 New Jersey proposed a state referendum to its constitution giving women the vote. Grover Cleveland described women as "sensible and responsible and they don't want to vote". Women looked to the national government for change continuing to speak loudly, parade, lobby and commit acts of civil disobedience. Women were the first to picket the white House with a slogan ("votes for women"). They wore yellow to symbolize their cause and give them a recognizable look. Finally, the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was passed in 1920.

The League of Women Voters was the successor to the women's suffrage movement. In 1932 the Princeton League was formed to promote education and citizenship. Over the years it continued to dispense information on state and local issues. In 1956 a women's Republican club was formed. The League found local success in women assuming mayoral positions in both township and borough. The granting of voting rights to African Americans and the role of Princetonians in this movement is another important theme of this exhibition. From the Quaker community of 1783 through Albert Einstein and Paul Robeson in the 40's and onward, Princetonians have taken an active role in the history of voting movements.

Another part of the exhibit deals with student activism leading to the passage of the 26<sup>th</sup> amendment which brought down the voting age to 18. The final section of the exhibit deals with problems and movements of today. For example, New Jersey's denial of parolees and probationers voting rights led to action by the ACLU and Rutgers. Questions from the audience about the ERA's non passage and the changing of the Electoral College proved that the struggle for voting rights is still continuing.

**\*\*While the Historical Society has used the League's archive of meeting minutes and reports for this exhibit, it still is short of photographs of the 40's, 50's, and 60's. PLEASE if you have any photographs that could be used in this exhibit contact Eileen Morales at PHS. (609-921-6748) \*\***

### **Of interest**

Linda Sippelle was appointed by Mayor Trotman to a three year term to the Borough Affordable Housing Board. The Board coordinates activities with Princeton Community Housing and the Princeton Housing Authority.

She also has appeared on Princeton Community Television to be interviewed about her trip to China, South Korea, and Vietnam.

## **Report from National Convention**

Linda Mather recently attended the national LWV national convention and her brief report follows.

A major formal part of the National convention will be summarized in both the SBR and the National Voter. Briefly, the slate was accepted – including the first man to serve on the national board. All current programs were retained with the addition of a health care program, a global climate change campaign, and a National Popular Vote compact study item. The PMP (per member payment) was increased to \$28 and \$29.20 over the coming years. Two former Oregon governors spoke. Barbara Roberts spoke about women as political leaders and John Kitzhaber spoke about Health Care. These excellent remarks – and others – should be available on the website shortly.

New Jersey was represented by an award to the Mountain Lakes LWV for a Green Community Initiative which increased membership and for a special recognition to Doris Schapira for her work as UN Observer.

This was my second LWVUS convention. I attended my first convention some twenty years ago in Denver. Some issues seem to be perennial – the relationship of the local leagues to LWVUS, questions and worries about the PMP, increasing membership. Then and now, the sessions were packed – no shopping or playing hooky during convention time. Although power point and cell phones are now ubiquitous, what has remained constant is the commitment of LWV members. They are passionate about LWV and about their programs. They believe that change is possible, indeed required to improve the country. And they're willing and ready to roll up their sleeves and do the work.

Linda Mather

## **Voter Service**

Voter Service has always been a League priority. We have until October 14 to register and inform voters before November's election. This year Chrystal Schivell will co-chair Voter Service with Rita Ludlum. Please let either Chrystal or Rita know your suggestions for effective places to hold registration drives. And please volunteer to help.

The League often receives requests to hold a Voters Registration at a corporate headquarters. PSE&G has put in a request to State Headquarters for the League to register voters at each of their service centers on any Monday in July or August. The nearest service center to our area League is in New Brunswick at 1 Penn Plaza and we seem to be one of the nearest Leagues to that site. If there is anyone (or two) interested and experienced in registering voters who would like to do this on any Monday in July or August, will you please call Rita Ludlum.

Chrystal Schivell [chrystal.schivell@verizon.net](mailto:chrystal.schivell@verizon.net)

Rita Ludlum [rludlum@phsstonebridge.org](mailto:rludlum@phsstonebridge.org)

## **Voting Rights and Wrongs**

The following is excerpted from “Voting Rights and Wrongs: A Snapshot of 2008 Presidential Primary Voting Problems and Recommendations for Reform” based on Voter Protection Project by the ACLU of New Jersey and League of Women voters of New Jersey June 2, 2008.

### **Introduction**

The polling places were open in Hoboken at 6:15 a.m., and the Governor was ready to cast his vote. However, according to media reports, when the Governor’s staff checked his polling place the day of the presidential primary, the voting machines were not working. Governor Corzine waited at home for a half hour while the problem was sorted out.

The Governor’s experience was the most prominent story of voting problems on Election Day, but it was only one of many that came to the attention of New Jersey Voter Protection Project. Every election citizens experience problems trying to exercise their right and responsibility to vote in New Jersey.

The American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey and the League of Women Voters of New Jersey’s Voter Protection Project provide hotlines and poll monitors during elections to help voters understand and secure their rights, and to navigate the mechanics of voting.

While there will always be minor issues at the polls, most problems were problems that we have identified in Election Day monitoring efforts since 2004: inaccurate information given to voters, failure to provide provisional ballots, voting machine failures and registration list issues.

We provide this report of the February 2008 Election Protection effort- which highlights the most common problems and our recommendations to rectify them. We are encouraged by the determination to solve many of these problems expressed by Secretary of State Nina Mitchell Wells since taking leadership of elections on April 1, 2008. She and her staff have pledged to be proactive on many of the following issues and work to address them immediately. We appreciate her desire to work collaboratively with advocates to achieve voter education and smooth and transparent elections. We hope to see ongoing engagement of advocates and election officials to address the concerns in this report.

### **Background**

The ACLU-NJ, LWVNJ, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, New Jersey Appleseed and other members of the New Jersey Citizens Coalition for the Implementation of the Help America Vote Act have worked together over the past several years to monitor and push for the improvement of elections in New Jersey.

The goal of the Voter Protection Project is to provide assistance to voters and would-be voters who experience voting difficulties around elections. Our efforts to provide assistance includes voter hotlines, poll monitors handing out voting rights information at polls on Election Day and volunteer lawyers ready to help would-be voters at election courts on Election Day.

For the February 2008 presidential primary, ACLU-NJLWV’s Voter Protection Project responded to over 140 voter calls for help, provided legal assistance at county court houses and assisted voters who encountered roadblocks in trying to exercise their rights to vote. These numbers are in addition to the calls received by the LWVNJ in between each election cycle. For the 2006 general election the Voter Protection Project responded to over 250 voter complaints, questions, and concerns.

## Methodology

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Our Voter Protection reports provide only an abbreviated snapshot of election and voting problems because of the Voter Protection Project's limited budget, volunteer pool, reach of advertising and access to polls.

People with voting problems tend to call their county election offices, state officials or local party organizations rather than non-partisan hotlines, which also reduces our total complaint number. The extent of impact is hard to determine because none of those election offices track or reports on the complaints they receive.

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## The Big Picture: Key Recommendations

**Improve poll worker training.** Poll workers are the link between voters and their election system. On Election Day, our right to vote is in their hands. When they give us wrong information, it imperils our right to vote. The majority of voting rights violations we hear about result from poorly trained poll workers, particularly around the failure to offer provisional ballots, erroneous requests for identification, and the provision of inaccurate information. Uniform poll worker training with role playing and sensitivity training and an emphasis on basics must be implemented.

**Record, track and rectify voter complaints and problems.** The state should establish systems for recording voter complaints and problems, and then analyze the causes. It should issue public reports that summarize the types of problems voters encounter and its plans to fix problems and improve the process. It should also take responsibility to resolve individual voters' problems, whether reported to the state or an outside organization, to allow them to vote in the next election. The state should also gather information about provisional, emergency and absentee ballots from all counties so it can further analyze local election performance.

**Educate and assist voters.** In addition to improving the performance of poll workers, the state can promote smoother voting experiences through a public education campaign distributing information about how to prevent or resolve problems at the polls, including the right to a provisional ballot, and utilizing statewide public notification systems that facilitate regular communication with voters.

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For the complete Report go to [www.aclu-nj.org/downloads/VoterProtection.pdf](http://www.aclu-nj.org/downloads/VoterProtection.pdf)

**DEADLINE FOR THE SEPTEMBER UPDATE IS AUGUST 15**

## LOBBY DAY IN TRENTON

Three important items are before the NJ Legislature at this time. Several affordable housing groups organized a Lobby Day in Trenton for June 5. I went down representing the League and Princeton Community Housing.

There is at last a comprehensive housing reform bill being considered. Assembly Bill A 500 is sponsored by Joseph Roberts, among others. Since he is speaker of the Assembly, it is felt the bill has some momentum. Among its many provisions would be the establishment of a Housing Trust Fund, funded by a 2.5% fee on non-residential property. It also would require that at least 15% of any affordable housing development should be for the very low income households, (those with incomes at 30% of the median or less). This requirement would rise to 20% soon. Another provision abolishes Regional Contribution Agreements (RCA's), the provision in the present law that allows municipalities to send half of their required COAH housing units to some other town. To make up for the loss of the funds that were sent to inner cities under present law this bill designates \$20,000,000 to go to these areas. This will be difficult to pass, as many towns do not want any affordable housing within their borders. However, the result of sending funds to inner cities is that the people cannot live where the jobs are, and it continues segregation of minorities.

Another bill tries to stop the foreclosure of many sub-prime mortgaged homes by placing a fee on the lender or server of the foreclosure. The funds used would go for counseling and emergency funds for those being foreclosed upon. It is hoped that rather than pay a \$2000 fee, a lender/server would decide to try talking to the people first and work out an agreement.

The third subject for lobbying was an item in the governor's budget. Rather than cutting the State Rental Assistance Program, as most items are being cut, the governor has asked for an increase of \$15,000,000. This program provides vouchers for low income people that they then use to rent a home, the State subsidizing the rent. 75% of these vouchers go to the extremely low income households, those earning 30% of the median or less. It is reported that there are over 100,000 households in NJ in that income category that pay 50% or more of their incomes in rent. Obviously, there is a need for these vouchers, and for the construction of more affordable housing.

There was an overflow crowd at the Appropriations Committee for Assembly Bill A 500. The bill was listed first on the agenda, but when the meeting started at 2:30 they announced that they would be hearing several other bills first. At 4:30 I had to give up and leave, as had many other people there in support of the bill. Very frustrating! However, I did learn that the bill was approved by the committee at 7:30 that evening.

This has been a very brief description of these items before the Legislature. If you are interested in learning more, the best resource is the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, phone # 609-393-3752. Ask for Arnold Cohen.

It is always helpful to write to members of the Legislature giving your views on legislation that is before them. I came away being tremendously impressed with the dedication that is required to be a member. They deserve our gratitude!

By Harriet Bryan

# League of Women Voters of the Princeton Area

## Annual Treasurer's Report 7/1/2007 – 6/30/2008

### Income:

Dues	5,155.00
Contributions	1,505.00
Interest	329.62
Moderator Fees	75.00
Annual Meeting	336.00

Total **\$7,400.62**

### Expenses:

PMP NJ	2,024.00	
PMP US	2,233.40	includes \$800 from Ed Fund
Insurance	100.00	
Postage/PO Box	429.76	
Fall Meeting	36.36	
Bulletin	369.14	
Citizen's Handbook		
Candidates' Night	32.00	
Workshops/Convention	1,222.74	
Annual Meeting	400.00	
Gifts/Awards	50.00	
Financial Support	150.00	Historical Society, Peace Action, Regional Planning

Total **\$7,047.40**

### Assets

Checking	\$7,294.83
CDs	\$7,615.94
Ed Fund	\$1,044.75

**\$15,955.52**



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*IMPORTANT DATED MATERIAL*

MISSION STATEMENT: The League of Women Voters<sup>®</sup>, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Please renew your dues now (July 2008 – June 2009)

Return this form with your check, made payable to the

***LWV of the Princeton Area*** to

Ellen Kemp, LWV of the Princeton Area, P.O. Box 253, Kingston, NJ 08528

**Dues: \$50 – Individual                      \$75 – Household                      \$22 – Student**

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 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Dues (7/1/08 – 6/30/09)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contribution                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total                                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_