



# THE HUNTINGTON VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF  
SUFFOLK COUNTY AND HUNTINGTON

P. O. Box 20693

Huntington Station, NY 11746

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April-May 2008

Katherine Hoak & Marcy Emerson, Co-Editors

Marilyn Brown & Judie Gorenstein,

Co-Presidents

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH



## IRON JAWED ANGELS

Starring Hilary Swank, Angelica Huston, Julia Ormond

Thursday, March 27 at 7 PM

\$5 Suggested Donation Reception at 6:30 PM

**Presented by Cinema Arts Centre and League of Women Voters**

***Iron Jawed Angels*** recounts a key chapter in US History: the struggle of suffragists who fought for the passage of the 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote in 1920. The suffragists had no vote, no political clout, and no equal rights. However, what they lacked under the law, they made up for in brains, determination, and courage. Oscar-winner **Hilary Swank** leads an outstanding cast in the inspirational true story of women who dared to make a stand for women's rights. Their wills were made of iron and their courage inspired a nation and ended up shaping the future of America. *USA, 2004, 124 min.*

Come see this inspiring film and afterwards join in a discussion of this legacy, what is currently happening with our voting process, and how you can become involved. Democracy is not a spectator sport!

## HUNTINGTON BOARD

2007-2008

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\*Term ends June 30, 2009

## MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENT

*I'm delighted to report that our Board, at its February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, approved the appointment of Judie Gorenstein as Co-President of our LWV of Huntington through June 30th, and she has accepted the position. I look forward to sharing the presidency with her in the coming months.*

*In honor of Women's History Month, we will be presenting, with the Cinema Arts Centre, a wonderful film, "Iron Jawed Angels," which shows the difficulties the suffragettes went through to achieve the vote for women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (See the cover page of this issue for information). Bring a friend, come early for refreshments, and spend an interesting evening with us.*

*Check our Calendar of Events for coming meetings: In April we'll be hearing about a suggestion for an alternate method of electing the President called "A National Popular Vote Compact Among the States"; and in May, we'll have a program on Health Care.*

*The State League has issued its Legislative Priorities for 2008, based on input from local leagues on which issues to focus for the year:*

- I. Good Government: Redistricting, Campaign Finance Reform, Legislative Procedures, Election Law and Procedures, Voting Technology, Court Restructuring/Judicial*
- II. Cost Effective and Accessible Health Care*
- III. Energy and Environment*

*(Other State League positions which will still be supported as these come to the fore are: Abolition of the Death Penalty, Equity in School Financing, Reproductive Rights, Salary Equity Reform).*

*Don't forget -*

*Members are always welcome to Board meetings. It's a good way to learn about what is going on, and possibly find an activity you'd like to join. Just call to let us know if you want to attend. (We need a Recording Secretary - someone to take minutes at our monthly board meetings. If this is a possibility for you, please let us know. It is a very important position on the Board).*

*Marilyn Brown*

**Voter Service Report – We Won!**

After years of our League members lobbying for the PBOS (paper ballot optical scanner), our efforts, as well as those of other groups, paid off. It appears that all counties in New York, other than Hamilton County, will be replacing their lever voting machines with a paper ballot optical scan system. The Commissioners of the Suffolk County Board of Elections have chosen the Sequoia Image Cast Ballot Marking Device/Scanner.

The testing of the voting machines was completed on February 27, 2008, and purchase orders were issued the following day. One ballot marker for the disabled was ordered for each polling site this year as per the agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ). More will be ordered later to replace all lever machines in 2009. Commissioners Anita Katz and Cathy Geier have made certain that our votes will be counted and counted correctly. I want to thank the commissioners, as well as the members of the voter service committee, for helping achieve our goal.

Besides the good news of the PBOS, we are all excited about the interest young people and, in fact, all voters, are showing in this election. Our voter service committee is looking forward to teaching Vote 18 in many of the neighboring school districts. In addition, we will be lobbying for less restrictions on absentee ballots. This is the perfect time to do this. In the public policy positions of the LWVUS, under Citizen's Right to Vote, it is stated that the League advocates protection of the right of all citizens to vote and the encouragement of all citizens to vote.

Questions asked on New York's current absentee ballot application are an invasion of privacy and intimidate voters by putting them and their property at risk. Last year, Bill A07286, which called for a revision of absentee applications, passed the State Assembly on June 4<sup>th</sup> and was referred to the Senate. Bill S05172 was held in committee, though, and not brought to a vote. A similar bill will be voted on in the Assembly this year and, again, is expected to pass. Members of the voter service committee will be contacting our senators to sponsor and support this bill. Others are urged to do the same.

However, there is even more to do. Thirty one states have no-excuse absentee ballots. An absentee ballot is an affidavit ballot, and voters DO have the right to choose it in place of an in-person vote. In New York, one must be out of the country for business, studies, vacation, or confined due to illness, disability or incarceration to be able to obtain an absentee ballot. These restrictions definitely limit the number of people who can vote absentee. Next year, when our voting machines are replaced, we can anticipate some resistance to change by some voters and poll workers. Allowing people to vote absentee would not only increase voter turnout, but decrease confusion. There is no better time than now to lobby for this change.

*Judie Goreinstein*

**Pierson High School Seniors Predict**

**Obama Wins Presidency!**

The Social Studies classes at Pierson High School took part in **VOTE 18** on February 29<sup>th</sup>. In addition to holding a mock election to decide which student candidate was their choice for President, we asked the students to make real-life decisions: who did they think would win the Democratic primary, and who did they think would win the presidency? In the Democratic primary, the vote was almost 2 to 1 for Obama over Clinton. In the general election, the vote was 33 to 17 for Obama over McCain. So you heard it here first .....! (Or probably in the Sag Harbor Express which came to cover the story).

My deepest thanks to and admiration for Judie Gorenstein, co-president of the Huntington League and Voter Services Chair for Suffolk County, for running Vote 18 for us in the Hamptons. Judie was first exposed to Vote 18 at the State Convention in White Plains and decided that she was going to take on the task of running the program in local schools. She didn't hesitate to agree to come out here and has said she will do it again, that is until some homegrown talent steps up.

We had a great time. The two sessions could not have been more different. The first class at 9:00 AM was very loose and humorous; the second group, many of them who were AP students, was serious and got right down to business. I had asked Dr. John Baer what was on the students' minds and then made up a list of sample questions that were given to the students before the meeting. The questions ranged from the war in Iraq, to affordable housing, to student loans.

Judie's technique differed from that of Vote 18 originator, Walt Townes, in that she put the questions into League language. Instead of just asking the students what they thought about the war in Iraq, Judie gave some background and asked the students which one of two views they agreed with. In this way, we began a dialog rather than just obtaining conflicting views, one after the other.

With the invaluable assistance of Arlene Hinkemeyer, Heidi Mack and Judy Samuelson, things went smoothly; and we registered 25 voters!

Since both Judie Gorenstein and I are going to the National Convention in Portland, Oregon, in June, I have made contact with the Planning Committee; and am 99% sure that Vote 18 will be on the National program! More to follow.

*Judie Roth*

*LWV of the Hamptons*

Notes From Town Hall February 5, 2008

The Town Board reserved decision to amend the code Chapter 198 (Zoning) for the Huntington Station Overlay District. People spoke in support of the proposals.

The Town amended the Uniform Traffic Code to include handicapped parking in private parking lots, thereby adding handicapped spaces in 16 private lots.

Enactment #2008-108 extended the moratorium on the issuance of approvals, grants or permits for golf course properties held in private ownership for an additional 6 months to August 9, 2008.

The Town Board authorized the Supervisor to execute an amendment to the contract with Andrus Architecture for the expansion of the Ice Rink Facility in Dix Hills Park.

The Board accepted a Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement as complete for Local Law Introductory No.45-2007 amending the Code of the Town of Huntington to add Chapter 172 (Land Conservation). Article I (Transfer of Density Flow Rights).

The Board voted to urge the N.Y.S. Senate and Assembly to sponsor legislation proposed by the County of Suffolk known as the 2008 "Downstate Suburban Workforce Housing for Economic Sustainability Act."

The Board voted to urge the N.Y.S. Senate and Assembly to actively support legislation introduced by Assemblyman James Conte that will require the N.Y.S. D.O.T. to prepare a comprehensive master plan for Republic Airport prior to any new construction.

The Board amended the Code Chapter 159 regarding the use of signs for advertising by sponsors of athletic teams. There are specified limits for sizes of signs and allowable times for display with approval by the Parks department.

A Public Hearing is scheduled for March 4, 2008 to consider amending the Code to add Chapter 157 Public Benefit Incentives and Article III Apprenticeship Incentives.

The Community Development Agency executed a 10 year lease with the Huntington Enrichment Center for 1264 and 1266 New York Ave.

*JoAnn McCarthy*

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**"EXONERATED"**

On Thursday , Feb. 21, at our monthly meeting , Susan Schindler, the NYC organizer for New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty\*, presented a film "The Exonerated" about six

people who were wrongfully convicted of murder and who were later exonerated after years of imprisonment (5 men,1 woman—one of the men was executed before exoneration).

Some of the facts brought out in the discussion after the film:

- NYS Court of Appeals: 2004 Ruling in People v. LaValle found the State's 1995 capital punishment statute unconstitutional. On 10/23/07, it upheld the 2004 ruling, overturning NY's last remaining death sentence (People v. Taylor).
- Nationally, at least 123 innocent people have been exonerated from death row.—about 1 for every 8 executed (an error rate of more than 10%). In addition, during the past 2 1/2 years in NY, at least 9 men sentenced to long prison terms have had their convictions overturned with conclusive evidence of their innocence.
- In NY, those accused of murdering white victims are more than twice as likely to face the death penalty as those who murder black victims according to a recent study by the Center for Law and Justice in Albany.
- More than half of the State's death sentences sought in the last ten years come from just 6 counties.
- When New York's death penalty statute was enacted, we did not have the sentencing option of life without parole; now that it is available, the death penalty is not needed to keep those convicted of murder off the streets.
- Support for the death penalty in NY has dropped approximately 20% since the early 1990's. According to a 2006 NY Times/CBS poll, 50% of the people favored life without parole, while 29% favored the death penalty.
- Since NY reinstated the death penalty in 1995, NY taxpayers have spent at least \$20 million pursuing capital cases without a single execution taking place.
- Most state studies have found that a system of life without parole is significantly cheaper than the death penalty even when costs of long-term imprisonment are included. The death penalty's costs divert resources from other areas, including crime prevention and victim's services.

*(Note: The LWVUS supports the abolition of the death penalty.)*

*\*New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty (NYADP) is "a statewide coalition of organizations and individuals committed to the abolition of capital punishment. It advocates for public policy change through education, grass-roots organizing, and lobbying."*

*Marilyn Brown*

# New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty

## IS YOUR SENATOR VOTING FOR THE EXECUTION OF INNOCENTS?

*In July, the New York State legislature passed its third death penalty bill for 2007. It had already passed S319 in May, a bill that would impose the death penalty for killers of police and correctional officers. Simultaneously, it **rejected** an amendment that would have incorporated widely-recommended innocence protections, one that would improve the collection and retention of DNA evidence; provide access to testing of that evidence to those seeking to prove their innocence; require videotaping of all interrogations; and implement eyewitness identification reform. These are minimal steps recommended by the Innocence Project to safeguard the innocent. New York has the dubious distinction of leading the nation, including Texas in wrongful convictions.*

Senator	District	For Death Penalty?	For Innocence?
Kenneth P. Lavallo	1	Yes	No
John Flanagan	2	Yes	No
Caesar Trunzo	3	Yes	No
Owen Johnson	4	Yes	No
Carl Marcellino	5	Yes	No
Kemp Hannon	6	Yes	No
Craig Johnson	7	Yes	No
Charles Fuschillo	8	Yes	No
Dean Skelos	9	Yes	No

## TAKE ACTION NOW!!!

If you can do one thing:

Please contact your State Legislators by written letter and phone, even if you have done so, and give them the message. "New York does not need the death penalty. What we do need are protections for the innocent."

*Remember to include your address in your letter.*

To identify and find out how to reach your State Senator, visit:

<http://www.lwvny.org/>, click on Citizen Action Toolkit and scroll down to My Elected Officials, or call 518-455-2800.

If you can do 2 things:

Give a copy of this alert to at least 3 people and ask that they pledge to write a letter or make a call

If you can do 3 things:

Host a NY State Exonerée as a speaker at your social, political, educational, or faith-based meeting, or show a film about innocence and the death penalty.

Go to [www.nyadp.org](http://www.nyadp.org) or contact [info@nyadp.org](mailto:info@nyadp.org) for more information, or call New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty organizer Colleen Eren at 516 849 2363.

