What to tell you about first? That there were over 900 Leaguers in attendance? That all of them are people you would like to meet? That resolutions and bylaws really are important but can drive the less detail-minded among us (like me) crazy! That Carol and I discovered we both love Starbucks vanilla frappucinos and tamarind sauce (“who knew” as Carol would say)? That Oregon has two terrific former governors? I’m going to start with the speech given by former Governor John Kitzhaber, “The Unfinished Business of the Baby Boom Generation: Health Care for the 21st Century,” because his presentation just knocked everyone out and because the League has just voted to bring health care front and center as its main advocacy program.

Governor Kitzhaber, who is a physician, started his story by reminding us about what was brought to us by the “greatest generation”—the people (for many of us, our parents) who fought in WWII, and brought us Social Security, the GI bill, our highway system, and Medicare and Medicaid. He asked us to think about what we are leaving our children—a planet that is in trouble and a Medicare deficit that will reach $67 trillion in five years as the baby boomers begin to reach Medicare age. His focus was to try to redefine how we look at health care and to urge us to shift the debate from what is wrong today to where we want to be five years from now. He spoke about the many stakeholders involved (insurance companies, employees with insurance, people happy with Medicare, hospitals, doctors, state and local governments, etc.) and how each group needs to see something that is worthwhile for them in gradually moving to something new. In other words, we just can’t tell the insurance companies that they are being shut down as health insurers and need to lay off thousands of people.

He referred us to the 9,000+ codes that are used in medical billing, none of which are for cures. Our system (if one can really call it that) is driven by these codes as they determine how much physicians and hospitals will be paid for taking care of us. And, since physicians are trained to do as much as possible for their patients, the incentive for higher cost is built into the system.

He told us that 70% of the health care dollar is spent on people with diabetes, coronary artery disease, asthma, and depression. Also 1% of the population uses 35% of the health care dollar, 5% uses 60%, and 10% uses an astounding 70%. People’s inability to pay medical bills has become the second largest cause of personal bankruptcy in the country.

I urge you to read an interview that Kitzhaber gave in Health Affairs in Jan/Feb. 2003 (just Google John Kitzhaber and you’ll find it) where he talks continued on page 6
Greetings from Portland! As many of you know, the national League of Women Voters convention was held in Portland, Oregon, this year, and Judi Roth, Executive Vice-President, and I attended, representing our League. As a matter of fact, as I write this, I am still in Portland, finishing up the business, and looking forward to coming home to the East End.

We all know that the best laid plans (of mice and man) can go awry, but at this convention there have been so many examples of the fact that if one plans, the chances of success are greatly increased, that the motto of the City of Portland has had great resonance.

Prior to the convention, the computer buzz had been filled with issues, ranging from the perception that the national organization was not sufficiently responsive to the membership, with suggestions to correct this through changes to the by-laws or resolutions, to the idea of advocating for a Department of Peace in the U.S. government, to proposed resolutions on issues as wide-ranging as re-apportionment, health care, and global warming. These issues met with varying degrees of acceptance by the assembled delegates and, it truly appeared to me, that the degree of success was dependent in large part on the extent to which the proponents had a good plan for action.

The clearest example of this was in the campaign waged by New York State, spearheaded by Lori Dawson of Saratoga County, to authorize a national study of the National Popular Vote. That campaign was successful, and it was so because Lori had done all of the necessary preliminary work so that the proponents knew what needed to be done procedurally to get the idea to the convention floor. Many other good ideas were not adopted at this convention because the proponents had not properly laid the groundwork and were caught by procedural or strategic mistakes that prevented their proposals from receiving full consideration.

The need for a good plan was echoed in the remarks of Dr. John Kitzhaber, former governor of Oregon, who suggested a new paradigm through which we should view health care, and by the members of a forum on global warming, who discussed the consequences of the effects of human imprint on the environment. The situations are dire, and the future looks bleak, but all of the speakers reiterated that if we develop and implement a plan, it can work.

Coincidently, the Hamptons Board met last week to chart our activities for the upcoming year. We have lots of plans that, we hope, will result in an interesting, educational, productive and fun year for our members. Our plans will only work, however, with the assistance of our members and so, with your help, we look forward to a successful year.

Carol Mellor, President

537-6998
CELEBRATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL OFFICE

Our luncheon, held at B. Smith’s Restaurant on June 5, honoring the women in elected office in the towns of Southampton and East Hampton was a rousing celebration, and a success in every way.

Our keynote speaker, Judith Hope, who—among many stellar accomplishments—was the first woman Town Supervisor on the East End, gave a wonderful talk assessing the status of women in our political landscape, urging women to seek political office, and describing why it was so important that they do so. (See page 15 for the text of Ms. Hope’s speech.)

The honorees, who had already heeded Ms. Hope’s advice and run for office and won their elections, were (in alphabetical order) Catherine Cahill, Nancy S. Graboski, Linda A. Kabot, Theresa Kiernan, Deborah Kooperstein, Jill Massa, Patricia Mansir, Diane McNally, Lynn Mendelman, Jeannine Nielsen, Julia Prince, Sundry A. Schermeyer, Lisa R. Rana, Kayla Talmage, Stephanie Talmage, Anna Throne-Holst, and Barbara Wilson.

These women were surrounded by their friends, family, supporters, community members, and League members who literally filled B. Smith’s restaurant with admiration, affection, and laughter. It was clear that the East End was ready to celebrate its women of accomplishment. The result was a sold-out luncheon and a wonderful party.

Many people contributed to the success of the event, and we thank them all. Particular thanks go to B. Smith’s Restaurant, Robin Pirro and her staff; Annie Lavinio of Sag Harbor Florist for contributing the beautiful centerpieces;

4th OF JULY PARADE

It’s time again to start getting ready to march in the Southampton parade on July 4. We invite and encourage all League members to join in as we “strut our stuff” before thousands of voters and will-be voters. This is too great a League visibility-op to miss. Let the community see and feel the League’s presence. There will be vehicles available for those who prefer not to walk. As usual, we will meet at the Southampton Railroad Station no later than 10:00 a.m. on that Friday. Any questions, call Gene Makl at 324-8662.

JULY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

“Transportation Alternatives,” our July 14th general membership meeting, is shaping up well. So far featured speakers are Kathy Cunningham of Five Towns Rural Transit and Robert Shinnick, Director of Transportation Operations for Suffolk County. Helene Williams, President of the LIRR, cannot attend but she has promised us that the railroad will be sending a spokesperson. Legislator Jay Schneiderman, who is very active on local transportation issues, might also be joining us. This meeting will be held at Southampton College as we know how important local transportation, and perhaps the re-establishment of a railroad stop at the College, is to the school.

At this writing the format of the meeting has not yet been fully decided. We hope to come up with hard questions for the speakers as to what they think is realistic for the future of public transportation for the Hamptons. Please put on your thinking caps and submit your questions to me at rothhandj@yahoo.com.

Written by Carol Mellor

Written by Judi Roth
GEARING UP FOR THE BIG ELECTION SEASON

Now that the presidential primary season is over, the reality of the upcoming general election can begin to sink in. And, therefore, the Hamptons Voter Services Committee is shifting to full throttle to do its part in helping to prepare community members to make informed choices on Tuesday, November 4.

The most immediate action that this group of committed members has taken is to review the processes for voter registration and identify appropriate sites for doing so. In conjunction with the Membership and Education Committees, Voter Services members will be seen at community and shopping centers, post offices, farmers’ markets, village fairs, and maybe even a beach or two throughout the summer and early fall right up until the state’s deadline for registration: October 10.

In preparation for that task, members spent a session reviewing the New York State registration form, noting the relevant dates for submission, and deciding who will be where and with whom. Besides voter registration, this committee will arrange for the LWVH to sponsor a Congressional candidates debate as well as town and relevant county candidates forums.

Also, if there are any propositions that will appear on the November ballot, the committee will prepare a brochure, distribute it, and make personal appearances to educate the public about the pros and cons of the ballot item—a service that the community has relied upon the League to provide.

So, this may be a relaxing time for us, but our plans are in place—thanks to a number of extremely willing and committed volunteers.

If you too would like to assist in any or all of these activities, please call me.

Anne K. Marshall, Chair

NATIONAL LEAGUE ADOPTS PROGRAM FOR 2008-2010

At the national convention, the delegates adopted four program items, as well as voting to retain all current positions of the LWVUS.

The national Board recommended that the delegates adopt by concurrence an amendment to the LWVUS principles which added the following:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive and judicial.

The second item, recommended by the Board and adopted, was a health care program, the details of which are to be determined, to educate members and communities in order to be better prepared to do health care advocacy.

Although the third item was not recommended by the Board, it was fairly apparent that the Board was not averse to its acceptance. This item is described as “a multi-level education and advocacy campaign to fight global climate change,” but the details of this have not been worked out.

The fourth adopted program item is a national study of the National Popular Vote. This study was recommended and advanced by the New York delegation as an offshoot of New York State League’s experience with the study we had commenced and then stopped in midstream when the national League indicated that the topic was not appropriate for state action. There were pockets of resistance to the study among the delegates based upon concerns about financial and personnel resources, but the vote was 363 to 273 in favor.

There were several actions and attempted actions which spoke to the processes of the League. For example, a resolution that directed the Board to look into a procedure for the consideration of resolution was passed, but a second resolution that sought to give the delegate body a stronger voice in the setting of action priorities failed.

A more complete report on the actions taken at the convention will be contained in the September Voter. In the meantime, all of the proceedings, as well as the PowerPoint presentations made by Board members and speakers, are available www.lwv.org, click on “For Members.”

Written by Carol Mellor
**July-August 2008**

**Note:** Meeting dates and times are subject to change. Please confirm with committee chairperson.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>July 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Natural Resources Committee meeting</strong></td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Hampton Library, Main Street, Bridgehampton</td>
<td>Sue Avedon at 329-1830</td>
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<td><strong>July 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>LWVH Board Meeting</strong></td>
<td>7:00-9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Bridgehampton National Bank, Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton. Members and guests welcome.</td>
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<td><strong>July 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voter Services Committee meeting</strong></td>
<td>12:30-1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Hampton Library, Main Street, Bridgehampton. Contact Anne Marshall at 537-3257. No meeting in August.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>July 14</strong></td>
<td><strong>Health Committee meeting</strong></td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Old Whalers Church, Union Street, Sag Harbor. Contact Judi Roth at 283-0759.</td>
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<td><strong>July 14</strong></td>
<td><strong>General Membership Meeting</strong></td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Southampton College, Student Center, Special Events Room. Contact Judi Roth at 283-0759 for details.</td>
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<td><strong>July 16</strong></td>
<td><strong>Special Events Committee meeting</strong></td>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Starbucks, Main Street, Bridgehampton. Contact Susan Wilson at 283-6549.</td>
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<td><strong>August 6</strong></td>
<td><strong>LWVH Board Meeting</strong></td>
<td>7:00-9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Bridgehampton National Bank, Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton. Members and guests welcome.</td>
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<td><strong>August 15</strong></td>
<td><strong>New-Member Dinner</strong></td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Hosted by Membership Committee. Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse. 977 Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike, Bridgehampton.</td>
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<td><strong>September 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>LWVH Board Meeting</strong></td>
<td>7:00-9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Bridgehampton National Bank, Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton. Members and guests welcome.</td>
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<td><strong>September 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>New-Member Dinner</strong></td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Hosted by Membership Committee. Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse. 977 Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike, Bridgehampton.</td>
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<td><strong>September 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>General Membership Meeting</strong></td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Education and Tax Reform. Further information to come.</td>
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**OTHER MEETINGS OF INTEREST**

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<tr>
<td><strong>July 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>4th of July Parade</strong></td>
<td>Gene Makl at 324-8662 for details.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>August 17</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ellen’s Run</strong></td>
<td>East Hampton High School, Long Lane, East Hampton. To register, go to <a href="http://www.ellensrun.org">www.ellensrun.org</a>.</td>
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about his ideas in detail. To sum it up, he states that in this country we never really get down to a discussion of what we’re paying for. Most of the debate is over how to pay for it. He continues, “the real difficult politics—the ethical questions—are about what we pay for. The politics of health care continue circling around health care as an economic commodity, not around the benefits that flow to us as individuals and as a society from health care.”

Segue to League’s New Advocacy Program on Health Care

“The LWVUS Board recommends a health care program to educate members and communities in order to be better prepared to do health care advocacy as needed.”

You might think that this is already the League’s health care policy but, with this statement about advocacy, health care moves front and center. I attended a standing-room-only caucus where the people sponsoring this program strategized about how to get it adopted. Since it is a Board proposal, its passage is probably assured but the process was fascinating.

Several people on the Health Committee spoke about existing legislation (HR 676) which is a single-payer system, and also about universal coverage. But, as was pointed out repeatedly, the League will remain flexible in what it actually works for; if another piece of legislation comes out of a new administration that satisfies the League’s aims (quality, affordable health care with access for all), then the League will be in a position to advocate for that program.

At the meeting, people were recruited to speak for the program and told to keep their comment to one minute and to keep the language focused on the policy statement. The idea was not to tell stories or your own ideas about why a particular type of health care bill was your favorite—just to state briefly why you supported this program and how it would help the League in its mission. For example, one might say: “I am in favor of this program as it will give League members an opportunity to educate the public about this most important issue facing our nation and give the League a voice in the upcoming national debate.”

The cons were also reviewed. One might be that the League has other issues where they should spend their limited resources—such as working on global warming. But the answer, in League fashion, is not to answer that statement, but simply to reiterate why you think health care is a more important program for the League.

The Health Committee gave out stickers that read “Healthcare for All” and handed out flyers on the morning that this policy was to be posed and on the day of the vote. They had a table with lots of information and, once this program is passed, will be looking to local leagues to be active. What form should that take? We were told that we should continue to work at local levels. For example, if a state is promoting its own “universal” health care program, we should support those efforts.

I found this an exhilarating session and, as I realize I have now taken up more space than I probably should, I will save my other thoughts on “The Department of Peace,” how we succeeded with VOTE 18 (Yay!), new membership ideas (we are doing so greaat!) and other comments for a future Voter.

Written by Judi Roth

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Robert Blake
10 Sheepfold Lane, East Hampton NY 11937
(631) 907-4499

New member Robert Blake has been coming to LWVH monthly meetings since his wife, Mary, joined us in 2007. With dual residences in Queens and East Hampton, he is happy to participate whenever he’s in town. Robert has not been a member in the past, but he remembers when his mother was. He says, “The informative meetings the League sponsors are vital to our understanding of political issues. And without that understanding of issues, we can’t assess candidates running for office.”

Marilyn Lamkay
21 Springy Banks Road, East Hampton NY 11937
(631) 324-1838

Although Marilyn has been politically active for many years, she only recently decided “it was time to make a statement” by joining LWVH. As a part-time resident of East Hampton for decades, she spends more time here since retiring as a student counselor at Bronx Community College. Her community activities are primarily focused on EEGO (East End Gay Organization), which she helped to found in the 1970s, and other gay/lesbian organizations. “I was an activist long before becoming a feminist,” Marilyn says. Other volunteer pursuits include ARF and Ellen’s Run, where she is a board member and directs volunteers the day of the event.
New York women, both Republican and Democratic, are descended from a long line of courageous political women. From Susan B. Anthony in Rochester, jailed in 1872 for daring to cast a vote, to Eleanor Roosevelt, who worked with the League of Women Voters in the 1920s to achieve meaningful social reform (child labor laws and sweat-shop regulation), to Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to run for President of the United States, to the New York political-activist women of today who continue to struggle, at both the state and local levels, for true influence in one of the most male-dominated political cultures in the world.

One would think, given this long history of remarkable “woman-talent,” that New York State would lead the nation in our election of women to public office. But, New York currently ranks 22 among the 50 states in our election of women to the state legislature, with only 11 women in our 62-member state senate, and only 40 women in the 150-member State Assembly: a total of 24%.

At the local level, the situation is no better: The Susan B. Anthony School of Women’s Studies at Rochester University regularly surveys the status of women in local elections. From 2002 to 2006, the number of women serving in New York’s 57 county legislatures increased from 16.6% to 17.4%, not even a 1% increase. The average and median number of women serving in county legislatures is three, a figure unchanged from 2002. Six counties have no women serving in their county legislatures.

In 2002, only one county, Rensselaer, had elected a woman as county executive. In 2006, two more counties, Broome and Monroe, elected women as county executive. There are sixty-two counties in New York State.

But, do numbers matter? Well, yes they do, and here’s why: As long as women have been running for public office, the question has been asked: Will women change the nature of politics, or will politics change the women? And the answer is related to numbers. Research shows that when a minority serves in numbers large enough to be a “critical mass,” they support each other’s experiences, beliefs, and values.

Where women serve in large enough percentages, their governments’ work may turn to issues especially relevant to women’s lives, including: domestic violence, child protective services, foster care, health care and women’s poverty. Or how about crime, poverty, the economy, the environment, global warming, and war? These are women’s issues too, are they not?

If women are surrounded only by men, or hugely outnumbered by men, as they largely still are in both corporate America and political America, women will learn to lead like men, with little chance of speaking in a different and authentic voice.

We all tend to join the pack. It’s only human nature. But we can and will become leaders honest to our values if we have enough support from other women and from like-minded men. Ultimately we will stand up and stand out.

As Chile’s President, Michelle Bachelet, explained when she appointed women as one-half of her ministers, and regional government officials,

“When there are a few women in politics, politics changes women, but when there are many women, it is the politics that change…. Today’s citizens want societies that are more open, more diverse, and more inclusive. With more women in positions of leadership, we will be able to advance that ideal.”

So it’s not only the emphasis on issues and priorities that will change when there are more women in leadership. Research also shows that there are substantial differences between women and men in their organizational styles:

- Women are collaborative where men are more often competitive.
- Women are goal-oriented where men are recognition-oriented.
- Women are more responsive to constituent requests and follow through on them.
- Women are problem-solvers.
- Women are more likely to include disadvantaged groups, powerless groups, in legislation.

One of the challenges of women in public office, at any level, is how to relate and interact with women officials of a different political party…of a competing political party.

In 1983, at the beginning of my second tour of duty as East Hampton Town Supervisor, a young Republican woman was elected at the same time that I was. The first week in office, she came to me and:

“Look: I know that you have to do what you have to do, and I have to do what I have to do. But, I want you to know that there’s nothing personal in it. We’re just doing our jobs.”

continued on page 16
In the U.S. Senate, where women are still only 16%, Democratic and Republican women meet for dinner once a month. It’s worth pointing out that virtually ALL of the Senate legislation that directly affects American women has been sponsored and passed by a bi-partisan coalition of Republican and Democratic women: The Women’s Health Equity Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, retirement accounts for home makers…the list is impressive.

I don’t have a magic formula for how women can better achieve a reasonable bipartisanship, but it is clear that women can and should master the skill of disagreeing with respect and courtesy for a differing point of view. And more: to collaborate and to cooperate, across partisan divides, wherever common cause can be made, while never selling out your core values.

I grew up in a time and place, in a southern state, where there were only two professions open to women: nursing and teaching. Nothing in my life’s experience prepared me for public office. My father was a prominent attorney and the Speaker of the state House of Representatives, and I worshiped him. When I was 12 years old, I said to him one day: “I think I’d like to be a lawyer when I grow up.” After several moments of painful silence he finally said, quite simply: “women aren’t lawyers.” To demonstrate how traumatic that moment must have been for me, I actually didn’t remember it until years later when it came back to me in a flash, as clear as a bell.

Fast forward, many years later, to East Hampton 1973. I had been recruited into presidential politics by a young mother who had her kids at the same school with mine. And, following that election which was disastrous for my political party, I agreed to become the chairman of my local political party. In retrospect, I can only assume that I must have been completely insane because my political party had not won a local election since 1942.

To say that it was a difficult assignment is nowhere near doing it justice—it was impossible. After almost a year of excruciating work trying to convince people to become candidates on what was certain to be a losing ticket, I and my two other political friends—the young woman who had recruited me in the first instance and a guy we all considered a political wizard—finally succeeded in finalizing the ticket (16 people).

The day before the petitions were to be printed, the head of the ticket—the candidate for Town Supervisor—dropped out and left town. I was devastated. Now mind you: I had spent almost a year learning the issues, studying the town budget, and even making an occasional terrified speech.

Why couldn’t I run for Town Supervisor?

I was the first woman elected town supervisor on Long Island in 1973. There have been many since and, while it is still not exactly commonplace, it is no longer the oddity that it was.

So it is a joy to me to be here today and to celebrate so many wonderful women in public office in East Hampton and Southampton. So many women making a difference, in ways that count, in our South Fork communities.

As has been mentioned, I founded an organization called The Eleanor Roosevelt Legacy Committee because I am committed to increasing the number of women in state and local office in New York. I am committed to it because I think it makes for better communities, for better local government. And, I am committed to it because I want to see New York women in greater numbers in federal office. And that will never happen until and unless there are more women in the pipeline.

The United States of America ranks 70th in the world in terms of the number of women serving in our national parliament, with only 17% of women in the House of Representatives and only 16% in the U.S. Senate. Until recently, we had not only never elected a woman head of state, we’d never even come close to nominating one. We rank behind almost every modern nation in the world: England, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Finland—even behind some Muslim countries: Pakistan, Rwanda, and now behind African countries like Liberia, and South American countries Chile, Argentina, and Asian countries like India.

In our 200-year history, only 24 women have ever been governors. Until Hillary Clinton was elected to the U.S. Senate, there had never been a woman elected to state-wide office in her own right in New York state. (There have been many lieutenant governors but they run on an inseparable line with the candidate for governor.)

As Hillary Clinton has often said over this past year, it is important for our daughters, and for our sons, to see women in positions of leadership, helping to face the enormous challenges of living in a dangerous and complex and rapidly changing world.

I met a woman earlier this year who is a journalist from Great Britain. She raised her young kids during the Maggie Thatcher years. One day her five-year-old son said to her, “Mother, did you know that BOYS can be Prime Minister too?” That’s not a situation we’ve ever had to explain to our children in this country, but wouldn’t it be nice if we did?

THANK YOU! And always remember the words of Eleanor Roosevelt: “You must do the thing you fear to do!”
Suffolk County BOE Updates Ways & Means...  
...How Much Will It Really Cost?

Commissioner Anita Katz and Deputy Commissioner Wayne Rogers addressed the Ways and Means Committee on May 28, 2008 to update the committee in HAVA compliance and its anticipated fiscal impact on Suffolk County. We will be getting $14,840,000 of HAVA money and $13,500,000 will be spent on the replacement voting machines with the remainder of the money going for training and education of the poll workers and the public. This year the county has spent $4,700,000 on the new machines. Suffolk county has ordered 370 Sequoia Dominion Optical Scan voting systems in order that there will be an accessible voting machine for people with disabilities in each polling site for the September 9, 2008 primary and the November 4, 2008 presidential election. Forty of these voting machines have already been delivered and the remainder will be delivered in July. As it is anticipated that it will take 15 minutes or more for the persons with disabilities to vote using the new machines, the general public will be urged to continue to vote on the lever machines this year.

However, in 2009 all the lever voting machines will be replaced by the Sequoia Dominion Optical Scan voting system. It is anticipated that all the new machines will be delivered by January 2009 which necessitates that a new warehouse be built for the additional storage. There are three reasons for needing additional storage space: the boxes which store the optical scanners are larger than the lever machines, the lever machines need to be kept for at least a year just in case of problems, and the paper ballots need to be stored for two years. The HAVA money should cover the cost of buying the additional machines, providing storage, training poll workers and educating the public. Education is seen as crucial. The BOE has budgeted $275,000. Information will be disseminated on the county website and through direct mailings.  Videos as well as demonstrations of the new machines where voters will be able to try them will be held at town halls, senior centers and at other public forums. (The possibility of videos being shown before/after Meet the Candidates Nights was discussed afterwards with Comm. Katz who thought it was a good idea.) Steps will be taken to make the (continued page 2)
Statement made at Health and Human Services Committee special meeting on the Suffolk Health Plan

The League of Women Voters of the United States announced its final health care position years ago, outlining goals the League believes are fundamental for U.S. health care policy. These include policies that promote access to a basic level of quality care at an affordable cost for all U.S. residents. The position stressed the importance of standardizing the level of services provided under publicly funded health care programs. The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons joined with the League of Women Voters of Suffolk County in supporting these policies. We believe that IR 1480 has the potential to jeopardize the smooth running of the county health center system that has taken many years to develop.

More than 30 years ago, Suffolk County recognized the need for broad access to health care by establishing eight family health centers and three satellite offices built and maintained with the help of taxpayer funds. In the early 1990’s when new Medicaid regulations required that all patients on Medicaid join an HMO that would manage their health care, many health center patients found themselves unable to continue their care at the health centers because their new insurance providers could not pay the health centers. The County created Suffolk Health Plan in 1995 to cover care for Medicaid patients at the health centers and their specialists. Since then, SHP has become a provider also for patients on Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus, for care delivered at the health centers.

Suffolk’s public health care system has been a model for other counties for providing comprehensive care at reasonable cost for the under- and un-insured. The Suffolk Health Plan has been part of that system. At meetings I have attended at the South Brookhaven Health Center Advisory Committee, a representative of the Suffolk Health Plan has been present to discuss the program and to be part of the planning of patient care at the health center. Its manual of operations stresses the comprehensive and preventive care that is offered through the health centers. The primary care services that are offered through the health centers are supplemented by a provider network of approximately 1,100 specialists.

Because of declining enrollment in the Suffolk Health Plan, and increasing costs, the County Executive has recommended the sale of the Suffolk Health Plan to a private company. According to the report of the Budget Review Office of the County Legislature, the Suffolk Health Plan has continued to turn a profit and may be able to increase enrollment with the addition of the Family Health Plan. Marketing staff of the Suffolk Health Plan was cut from 14 to eight between 2004 and 2008. Few of the marketers are Spanish speaking. If administrative problems do exist, can they not be corrected by the county if the county owns the plan?

Theoretically, if the County HMO is sold to a private company, it may choose after the three to five year initial term to include fewer patients from the health centers and more from the broader market if their care costs less. If so, and patients lose the coverage at the health centers, they will again lose the preventive care that we know is so important and turn to local hospital emergency rooms.

Given the difficulties we see on a national level regarding the absence of health coverage for so many millions of people and the inability of elected officials on a national level to grapple with solutions to this problem, we encourage a slow, deliberate analysis of the Suffolk Health Plan before any sale or other action would take place. It seems to us that the County cannot walk away from its critical responsibility for publicly funded health care for the most vulnerable in our communities without further consideration of the effects on that population.

Presented by Nancy Marr, LWV of Suffolk County
Judy Samuelson, LWV of the Hamptons on June 2, 2008

Suffolk County BOE Update… continued

The transition go smoothly and gain the public’s confidence.

There was concern on the part of many members of the Ways and Means committee about the operating expenses. There is an annual expense for software of $150,000. The cost of printing the ballots for the primary and general elections is estimated to be between $1,500,000 and $2,000,000 as it is mandated that ballots be printed for 115% of registered voters in English in addition to a percentage being printed in Spanish. What happens if there are special elections of if there is a court case which may not be decided until the day before Election Day? These present additional costs. One legislator also brought up the possibility of there needing to be a sprinkler system in storage area due to the amount of paper. The need to recycle the ballots was also discussed. Ways to curtail some costs were also addressed. In the future, can printing and software be done in house? Can the county find free storage space for the lever machines? These questions remain unanswered for now, but what is certain is that our lever machines will be replaced by 2009. New York is under a mandate and makes monthly reports to the judge on its progress. In 2009, all New Yorkers will vote on a paper ballot optical scan voting system and in Suffolk County we will be using the Sequoia Dominion System.

Judie Gorenstein
LWVSC Voter Service Chair
Summary of LWVH Board Retreat
June 11, 2008

Information Items
• Terri Levin Davgin, Maira Passano, and Judy Samuelson have been approved as Appointed Directors.
• Carol Mellor congratulated Susan Wilson and her committee on the successful June 5 luncheon.

Committee Reports
• Fundraising: Susan Wilson requested that the committee’s name be changed to “Special Events,” which was approved. Sue briefly described events that are in the planning stage to increase League visibility.
• Membership: Arlene Makl reported total membership of 195. The committee will be working closely with Voter Services in the coming months.
• Natural Resources: Carol reported for Sue Avedon that the proposed entertainment complex in Riverhead will be handled at the League’s Suffolk County level.
• Voter Services: Anne Marshall outlined the plans to register voters and the League’s possible role in upcoming elections and debates.
• Education: Judi Roth described efforts to present VOTE 18 at local high schools and Southampton College.
• Publicity: Arlene Hinkemeyer reported on her efforts, which include enhancing our mailing lists to include civic organizations.
• The Voter: Maura Lester outlined a back-up plan and division of labor for production of The Voter. Joy Cordery reported that work is underway for this year’s ad section, with many advertisers renewing.

Discussion Items
• Budget: Members were reminded to submit League-related expenses, on the proper forms, to enable accurate accounting and facilitate future planning.
• Calendar: Proposed general membership meetings include: July 14, Transportation Alternatives; September 8, Tax Reform and Education Funding, preceded by new-member dinner; November 10, Natural Resources – Riverhead project (tentative).

The next Board meeting will be on July 2 at 7:00 p.m. at Bridgehampton National Bank.

Submitted by Maura Lester

Thank you to all who have sent in your “early bird” dues.
You have saved LWVH the cost of additional mailings.

Terri Levin Davgin, Maira Passano, and Judy Samuelson (left to right) were welcomed as new Appointed Directors at the Board meeting. (Photo by Anne Marshall.)