May 2007

Civic Groups Lay Out Post-Budget Passage Reform Agenda*

Groups Urge Governor & Legislative Leaders to “Fix Albany”

“Reform NY” Campaign to Kick Off

Civic groups Citizens Union, Common Cause New York, the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), and the League of Women Voters of New York State laid out their post-budget passage reform agenda and urged Governor Spitzer, Senate Majority Leader Bruno and Assembly Speaker Silver to enact fundamental reforms, including campaign finance and legislative redistricting reforms, in the 32 session days scheduled before the Legislature adjourns on June 21. The groups also announced the kick-off of the “Reform NY” campaign to promote their reform proposals and press lawmakers on the reforms.

At the legislative halfway point, with the state budget largely concluded and 32 scheduled legislative session days remaining on the calendar, the groups urged that major reforms must be achieved before the end of session to fundamentally change Albany. Topping the list are changing the way New York State’s electoral campaigns are funded and overhauling the way legislative district lines are adjusted after the census.

Reform New York’s Campaign Finance Law

1. **Ban soft money.** Unlike federal law, New York State allows donations of an unlimited amount to “housekeeping” accounts. The soft-money loophole allows individuals, PACs and corporations to exceed New York’s already high “hard money” limits by giving to the parties’ housekeeping accounts.

2. **Lower sky-high campaign contribution limits.** Individuals are allowed to contribute $94,200 annually to political parties; $37,900 to statewide candidates for a general election (plus $18,100 for a primary); $9,500 to state senate candidates for a general election (plus $6,000 for a primary); and $3,800 to assembly candidates for a general election (plus $3,800 for a primary). Candidates for President of the United States of America can only receive contributions of $2,300 (and an additional $2,300 for the primary). New York should limit contributions to bring them in line with the national limits.

*This news release was issued on April 12, 2007. For more information: Dick Dadey, Citizens Union, 917-709-2896; Rachel Leon, Common Cause/NY, 917-847-3625; Barbara Bartoletti, LWV/NYS, 518-469-8905; Russ Haven, NYPIRG, 518-436-0876.

continued on page 15
It’s May and so we almost promise—but can’t guarantee—that the weather should not be a factor in your decision to attend a variety of League special events during this month. There are three events to which you are invited—scheduled so that they don’t overlap:

- **May 6:** League of Women Voters of the Hamptons 30th Annual Meeting.
- **May 10:** League of Women Voters of Suffolk County Annual Convention. (See calendar on page 5 for details.)
- **May 18-20:** League of Women Voters of New York State Bi-annual Convention. (See calendar.)

From my perspective, the most important and also most accessible gathering is our own Annual Meeting.

The date, time, and place is Sunday, May 6 from 3:00-5:30 p.m. at the Bridgehampton Community House.

The Annual Meeting has several purposes. To quote from our bylaws:

- **The Annual Meeting shall:**
  a. Adopt a local program for the ensuing year.
  b. Elect officers, directors and members of the Nominating Committee.
  c. Adopt a budget.
  d. Transact such other business as may properly come before it [Article VII, Section 2].
- **The Annual Meeting shall act upon Program using the following procedures:**
  a. A majority vote of those present and voting at the Annual Meeting shall be required for adoption of subjects in the proposed program presented by the Board of Directors [Article IX, Section 3].

What the bylaws don’t say, but what we look forward to, is the opportunity to informally meet and interact with our fellow Leaguers and invited guests and to hear our keynote speaker. This year we are delighted that our own **Assemblyman Fred Thiele, Jr.**, will address us. As we know, he is a most knowledgeable and engaging speaker. Given the changeover in Albany and the calls for significant reform in how the state government operates, we look forward to hearing his perspective on current and relevant issues. And audience members will have a chance to ask him questions.

Additionally, as part of the Annual Meeting agenda, attending members are asked to suggest areas for study and possible action over the next year or two. Please show your active support of the League by joining us on May 6th.

**Anne K. Marshall, President**

**537-3257**
The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons

cordially invites you to attend its

30th Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 6, 2007
3:00–5:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker:
Fred W. Thiele, Jr.
New York State Assemblyman

Bridgehampton Community House
corner of Montauk Highway and School Street
Bridgehampton

RSVP 324-4637

Education and Social Policy

VOTE 18 AT PIERSON HIGH SCHOOL

On the first day of school after spring break, Walt Townes, originator of Vote 18, and I arrived at Pierson High School in Sag Harbor at 8:45 a.m. to begin the first of two Vote 18 sessions. Vote 18 is the interactive, educational program that Walt has designed to take voting age students through the history of voting in our country, then moves them on to a discussion of current issues (abortion rights, drinking age, a draft, affordable housing, etc.), selects two students to run for president (with each student giving a stump speech), and then they get to vote.

The students were from the classes of Dr. John Baer. As they filed in to the auditorium and took seats scattered about, they looked interested but, in the wish to be “cool,” not too interested. There was the student sleeper, the one who didn’t want to come up on the stage, the group that you knew knew the answer but felt peer pressure not to speak out, and so on. As I’ve learned from taking part in four of these classes, this is par for the course in teenage behavior.

Both classes, the one at 9:00 a.m. and the second one at 10:30 a.m., each of about 25 students, were challenging and engaging. Not being able to drink when you’re old enough to fight for your country is a real hot button among the students. Surprisingly to me, there were several strong supporters of the right-to-life position among the students, along with a decidedly pro-affordable housing position. Each class recognized the difficulty faced by the two students who ran for president in each session in trying to please the voter yet holding firm to their own views.

We registered thirty-one new voters; about ten of these are already 18 and will be able to vote in the Sag Harbor School Election on May 15th. I’d like to thank Heidi Mack for providing all of the voter registration forms and the many League members who came to observe the program and lend support.

Judi Roth, Chair 283-0759

Judi Roth at the podium with Walt Townes on stage at the demonstration of Vote 18 at Pierson High School.

LWVH’s Pat Arceri helping two students register to vote.
(Photos by Anne Marshall.)
In my opening comments at our April 16th panel on the No Child Left Behind legislation, I mentioned Tom Friedman’s thoughts from The World Is Flat about the competition Americans face from well-educated and highly motivated Asians. It was enlightening to me that two of our speakers also made reference to this book. I highlight that here because of the importance we all must place on how our children are educated because, not to be corny about this, they are the future of America and in a globalized world, the competition will be fierce. As one of our panelists (Dr. Jo DeVincenzi) pointed out, if only one percent of the Chinese population rates at the genius level, that is still one million people!

The first speaker, Dr. Candace White-Ciraco, Director of the Office of Planning and Program Improvement of Eastern Suffolk BOCES, shared a wealth of knowledge on the history of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Dr. White-Ciraco told us that the first national education act dates from 1954 when the Brown vs. Board of Education decision ruled that discrimination existed in public schools. NCLB is the seventh reauthorization of that original legislation.

Dr. White-Ciraco, like her co-panelists, agrees with the goals and intents of the legislation but has questions and concerns over its implementation. The four principles of the program are:

1. Stronger accountability for results.
3. Greater local control and flexibility in carrying out the mandates.
4. Emphasis on curriculum that is based on scientific research.

Dr. White-Ciraco’s concerns centered on:

- Determining how you can use “scientific research” in rating curricula.
- The act does not seem to be serving all children equally, especially the English learners and special needs children.
- Schools have to make decisions as to how to spread their money around and, in some cases, that may mean funding tutoring sessions to keep up scores at the expense of physical education and arts classes.
- Very stringent qualifications for teachers are particularly hard to meet in rural areas.

The positive features of the program include the following:

- In the past, tests were “all over the place” and there were no good benchmarks in use; now yearly progress can be charted and analyzed.
- Data is disaggregated into small groups so that teachers can clearly see where help is needed.
- District report cards are mailed to each parent, who now receives much more information on their school’s performance.

Dr. Jo DeVincenzi, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for the Southampton School District,
May 2007

No Housing Committee meeting in May.

May 2  Wednesday  LWVH Board meeting.  Bridgehampton National Bank.  5:15-7:15 p.m.  Members and guests welcome.

May 6  Sunday  LWVH Annual Meeting.  Guest Speaker:  New York State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr.  Bridgehampton Community House, Montauk Highway and School Street, Bridgehampton.  3:00-5:30 p.m.  RSVP:  324-4637.

May 7  Monday  Natural Resources Committee meeting.  Bridgehampton Library.  4:00 p.m.  Contact Anne Baird at 613-6013.

May 8  Tuesday  Health Committee meeting.  East Hampton Library.  1:00 p.m.  Contact Judi Roth at 283-0759.

May 9  Wednesday  Membership Committee meeting.  Bridgehampton Library.  11:00 a.m.  Contact Arlene Makl at 324-8662.

May 10  Wednesday  LWV Suffolk County Annual Convention.  Bellport Country Club.  4:00-7:00 p.m.  See page 17 for the details.

May 15  Tuesday  Education Committee meeting.  Cooper Hall, Rogers Memorial Library, Southampton.  1:30 p.m.  Contact Judi Roth at 283-0759.

May 15  Tuesday  Deadline for June issue of The Voter.

May 16  Wednesday  Fundraising Committee meeting.  Starbucks, Bridgehampton.  2:00 p.m.


LOOKING AHEAD

June 6  Wednesday  LWVH Board meeting.  Bridgehampton National Bank.  Members and guests welcome.

June 11  Monday  General Membership Meeting.  “Is Health Care on the East End Healthy?  The Impact of the State Commission on Health Care Facilities.”  Panel to include Robert Chaloner, President and CEO of Southampton Hospital; a speaker from the State Commission on Health Care in the 21st Century; and a representative from another East End hospital.  Westhampton Free Library, Westhampton Beach.  6:30 p.m.

TOWN BOARD MEETINGS

SOUTHAMPTON

All Southampton Town Board meetings are held in the Town Board Room, Southampton Town Hall, Hampton Road, Southampton.

May 8  Tuesday  1:00 p.m.

May 22  Tuesday  6:00 p.m.

EAST HAMPTON

May 1  Tuesday  10:00 a.m.  Brown Bag meeting.  Montauk Firehouse/EH Conf. Room, Montauk.

May 4  Friday  10:00 a.m.  Regular meeting.  Town Hall Courtroom, E.H.

May 8  Tuesday  10:00 a.m.  Brown Bag meeting.  Emergency Services Building/EH Conf. Room, E.H.

May 15  Tuesday  10:00 a.m.  Brown Bag meeting.  Springs Firehouse/EH Conf. Room, Springs.

May 17  Thursday  7:00 p.m.  Regular meeting.  Town Hall Courtroom, E.H.
believes that the complaints about testing and “teaching to the test” are overstated. She believes that, particularly in New York, testing was always a part of schooling. Like Dr. White-Ciraco, she says that in the past the tests used may have had no connection to what was being taught. Now tests have had a large amount of teacher input and are geared to the ideas that are being taught.

She believes that the predictive value of the tests lead to earlier interventions. Because the State is often too slow in providing results, Southampton has found a way to get and interpret their results faster so that they are ready to be proactive in helping children who need help and remediation.

All speakers were unhappy about the testing pattern for children in ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. They stated that it takes three to five years, for example, for a third-grade foreign student to gain proficiency in English. Yet, tests are often required within six months of the child’s entry into the school, and this can affect the school’s and the child’s standing. Another problem area is with special needs children. Instead of being trained in needed life skills, they are given math tests. New York State had requested that the federal government allow them to test by developmental level rather than by age but was refused.

Mr. Ron Masera, the Principal of Westhampton Beach Elementary School, acknowledged that Westhampton Beach is a low needs/high wealth district with a 1-to-1 laptop ratio for each student! He said that this type of learning is really different for the teachers; they are no longer in the spotlight as kids “access, process, and synthesize” on their own and get their own feedback from the computer programs. He believes, however, that “at the end of the day, good teaching gets the job done.”

Although cultural diversity is slower in arriving in Westhampton Beach, it is front and center in the overall Town of Southampton, where Dr. DeVincenzi told us that students from 46 different countries are represented. And all speakers spoke of the heavy weight of wealth (and all that that implies) in the success of students. Dr. White-Ciraco’s statistics showed that countywide on English Regents exams, of students scoring 65% and above, 78% of the students who lived in the least wealthy districts passed, while in the wealthiest districts, 95.7% of the students passed.

Mr. Benito Vila, a parent of a 6- and a 12-year-old from Sag Harbor who is the sports editor for the Sag Harbor Express, president of the Sag Harbor Little League, and very involved in parent/child activities, talked from the vantage point of the fortunate parent whose children do very well in school; the downside for them is instances of boredom as the class tries to keep all children moving forward. An audience question about what is being done for the gifted child brought the response from Dr. DeVincenzi that there is a continuing need for differentiated instruction, for additional readings, etc., and for parents to let the teachers know if the child complains of boredom at school.

In summary, this was a highly educational meeting for all 55 attendees. The Education Committee, in its next-day review and critique of the meeting, agreed that we will follow up with Dr. White-Ciraco and Congressman Tim Bishop as the legislation makes it way through Congress so that we may provide guidance to League members on corresponding with our legislators on this important piece of legislation.

Judi Roth, Chair  283-0759
3. Ban transfers from one political committee to another. On top of the sky-high contribution “limits,” political parties are able to undermine existing contribution limits by transferring donations of unlimited size from their accounts to the candidates of their choice. This loophole should be closed.

4. Ban campaign fundraising during the legislative session. Unlike 28 states, New York imposes no additional restrictions on campaign fundraising during the legislative session, nor does it impose any unique limitations on lobbyists’ involvement in campaign activities.¹

5. Strengthen and expand disclosure and reporting. Unlike federal law, contributors do not have to disclose the names of their employers or even the names of those who actually deliver campaign contributions (a.k.a. “bundlers”). Contributors should disclose their employers and identify those who deliver campaign contributions. Contributions should be reported twice during the legislative session.

6. Strengthen enforcement. The recently adopted budget added money for compliance staff for New York State’s Board of Elections. The BOE now must aggressively monitor and enforce the Election Law.

7. Ban “personal use” of campaign funds. New York’s vague prohibition on the use of campaign funds for personal use has resulted in the use of such funds for non-campaign related expenditures like junkets, country club memberships, flowers, and leased cars. The law must be tightened to clearly prohibit such uses.

8. Enact public campaign financing. New York’s combination of huge contribution limits and the commonplace practice of incumbents holding fundraisers near the Capitol during session promote a heavy reliance on those with the financial resources to fund elections – typically special interests with business before government.

9. Ban “pay to play” for government contractors. Government contractors should be banned from making political donations to remove any suspicion that contributions play a role in the award of public contracts.

Create an independent redistricting commission to draw legislative and congressional district boundaries for the 2012 elections and beyond.

New York must create an independent redistricting commission that is required to draw state district lines that adhere to stringent criteria to eliminate using redistricting for partisan advantage and that includes a substantial public participation component.

1. Partisan redistricting has distorted legislative representation. If district lines were consistently drawn to benefit constituents or communities of interest, one would expect that Senate and Assembly districts would share many common boundaries.

2. Redistricting decisions undermine the concept of “One Person, One Vote.” Only 29 of 212 legislative districts (14 percent) are within one percent of the “ideal size.” Indeed, New York’s legislative districts can be dramatically different in size, pushing the threshold of the legally permissible. Those districts with greater population are effectively denied the same level of representation as those with far fewer residents.

3. Redistricting decisions contribute to New York State’s lack of competitive elections. New York’s incumbent return rate is one of the highest in the nation, hovering close to 95%. When districts are manipulated to avoid electoral challenges, the voters are ultimately denied a real choice on election day.

4. Redistricting decisions play a critical role in having maintained Albany’s legislative status quo for decades. In the last 30 years, New York has undergone significant changes. Yet, when it comes to our legislature, not much has changed. Since the Democrats took control of the Assembly in the 1970s – and redrew the maps in 1980 – the majority parties in each house have maintained their dominance, and critical issues have consistently failed to be addressed.

LEAGUE HISTORY

At the League’s first meeting in February 1920, the League’s founders pledged to reach out, reform, and improve the lives of citizens everywhere. Nearly nine decades later, we remain intensely committed to those same goals.

The League’s weekly newsletter in January 1921 maintained that this non-partisan organization of women (and men, as of the 1970s) would “work wholeheartedly for good government, for better laws and for higher political standards, without a desire for spoils or office…”

Eleanor Roosevelt was a member and wrote in Weekly News, “Common Sense Versus Party Regularity” in September 1921:

“Every voter should enroll as a member of that party whose broad principles he or she prefers...such enrollment does not preclude the voter from supporting...candidates of another party...if at any given time an individual nominee of our party appears to us unworthy, then we have an even higher duty to our heritage as American citizens. America must come first, not party.”

Roosevelt urged and advocated that women (and men) affiliate themselves with a political party since through party government alone could the greatest achievements be reached. In November 1923 she spoke at a League Citizen School held in Albany, NY.

The stated object of the training was: “To interest the homemaker and taxpayer in the great opportunities of citizenship. To arouse the lukewarm and indifferent voter. To reduce the number of non-voters in every community. To improve the electorate by education.”

The League continues to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, and provides non-partisan voter information.

NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT (notes of Water for Long Island meeting 4/12/07)

As of March 9, 2007 the hearing on the SCWA Application for a Lloyd Aquifer well was closed. The ALJ (judge) will review all the evidence and issue a ruling of the Facts and make a recommendation for the final ruling to the DEC Commissioner. (The new DEC Commissioner is Pete Grannis.) The process is still on-going. One can expect it to take more than three months for the ruling to be handed down - given the patterns followed in the past; and it might take more time given the large amount of testimony submitted. After the ruling by the ALJ, there can be appeals by the unsuccessful party. After the appeals have been settled, the ruling goes to the Commissioner, who then issues the final ruling. A party can take the DEC Commissioner to Court, under an Article 78 ruling, if that party is not happy with the Commissioner's ruling. This issue may continue in the judicial system for many years yet. Either party is expected to challenge the ALJ's ruling and the DEC Commissioner's ruling.

We urge members to contact many elected officials to educate them on the issue of the fragility of the aquifers and the Lloyd, in particular. There have been many new officials elected who do not know about this issue in detail. We may speak to them about the effects of climate change/global warming on our water supply. (Gov. Spitzer's #1 priority on the environment is "climate change").
League of Women Voters of Suffolk County
39th Annual Convention

Thursday, May 10, 2007
Bellport Country Club, Bellport, NY

Guest speaker:
Michael White
Executive Director, Long Island Regional Planning Board

Honorees:
Cathy L. Richter Geier and Anita S. Katz.
Commissioners, Suffolk County Board of Elections

4:00 – 4:30 Registration, coffee/tea/soft drinks available
4:30 – 6:30 Business meeting, awards, and speakers
6:30 – 7:30 Buffet (cash bar available)

Cost- $30 in advance, $35 at the door
(make checks payable to LWVSC)

Please RSVP before May 3 to Marilyn McKeown,
15 Mott Lane, Brookhaven NY 11719
631 286-1169

Directions:
From LIE Exit 64 South or from Sunrise Highway
to Rt. 112 South. Take Rt. 112 South to end:
Montauk Hwy. Go left (east) for 1 mile. Road Forks.
Stay right onto South Country Road for 2 miles.
Bellport Country Club is on the right.
The LWVH’s Annual Meeting is one of the highlights of our year. In many ways this meeting gives members and potential members an understanding of what the LWVH offers them: an established organization with clear goals, an excellent reputation within the community and a membership of focused individuals. It also offers an opportunity to see several of our committees at work. Our Nominating Committee provides a slate of candidates. The Fundraising Committee runs a raffle. The Annual Meeting Committee puts it all together and makes it work.

Looking to the future, the Annual Meeting is the beginning of our year, and this year more will be asked of us.

We are coming upon a Presidential election in this country and the League gets increasingly involved. We go into the schools and to organizations registering voters; we moderate debates; we go to various organizations and offer nonpartisan explanations of propositions; we invite local candidates to be heard by their communities in a nonpartisan environment. With all of these necessary functions we continue to maintain all of the committee responsibilities. Increasing our membership is always vital to the LWVH. Larger membership means more participation in our various committees, more responsibilities to be undertaken by the LWVH, and additional service to our community. It also represents the give and take of participation. The membership helps the LWVH achieve their goals and the League, in turn, enables individuals to utilize their talents in meaningful ways.

The Annual Meeting also gives us all an opportunity to invite friends and neighbors to enjoy this day and become a member of our organization.

Arlene Makl, Chair 324-8662

DO YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS? Call us at 324-4637—we will try to arrange to have you picked up.

ARE YOU MOVING, changing your phone number or your e-mail address? Let us know so you can stay in the loop.

DO YOU WANT THE LEAGUE TO FOLLOW-UP with someone you think should join the LWVH? Call Pat Arceri 267-3062 with the name, address, and phone number, and she will send that special someone information about the League.

The prizes for the raffle at the Annual Meeting will be:

1. A $100 gift certificate to The Lodge Restaurant in East Hampton.
2. One 50-minute Brush & Tone/Seaweed Wrap at the spa at Gurney’s Inn, including use of Gurney’s indoor heated seawater pool, sauna, steam room, roman bath, and fitness center.
3. A $50 basket of gourmet treats.

Tickets can be purchased at the meeting for $5.00 each.

Susan Wilson, Chair 283-6549

OVERDUE THANKS!
Many thanks to Joan Porco for her good work composing the New Member bios. We all appreciate her talent, time, and effort.

LWVH
30th ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, May 6, 2006
3:00–5:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker
Fred W. Thiele, Jr.

Bridgehampton Community House

RSVP: 324-4637
MEMBERSHIP DUES

Dues may be sent to: LWVH, P.O. Box 2253, East Hampton, NY 11937

_____ Full-time Student $15  _____ Supporting $ 85
_____ Individual $55  _____ Education $125*
_____ Household $85  _____ Donation $_____

Dues Year is June 1, 2006 through May 31, 2007.

_____ Member Renewal  _____ New Member

Visa and MasterCard accepted.
Card Number:______________________ Exp. Date: _________________
Signature: ___________________________________________________

Please make checks payable to LWVH and mail to:

LWVH, P.O. Box 2253, East Hampton, NY 11937

*For Education membership, amounts above dues level are tax deductible. In this case, please make checks payable to EDUCATION FOUNDATION—LWV/Hamptons.
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

GIVE A GIFT MEMBERSHIP
to a friend, family member, or neighbor.
It is a unique gift that may lead to a lifelong League membership.

DO YOU WANT TO GIVE SOMEONE A UNIQUE PRESENT
for graduation, a birthday, for just being a good friend or neighbor?
How about giving a League membership?
Call Arlene Makl at 324-8662.
See Dues Structure on reverse side.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER’S NAME ___________________________________________________
OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER’S NAME____________________________________________
WINTER ADDRESS _______________________________________________ AS OF _________
________________________________________________________________________________
SUMMER ADDRESS_______________________________________________AS OF _________
________________________________________________________________________________
PHONE (WINTER) ___________________________PHONE (SUMMER)_________________
E-MAIL ADDRESS _______________________________________________________________