

Newsletter

Volume 10 Issue 2

February 2004

DAY ON THE HILL

Come Hear Romney & Finneran

By Andrea Kelley

The League's annual day of information gathering and lobbying at the State House is upon us. This is always a productive event to hear what League priorities and programs are at the state level, and to meet our local legislators one on one. Governor Mitt Romney and House Speaker Tom Finneran will be featured speakers.

LWVM presents it's program and action items. If you want the chance to talk directly with our legislators about the key issues that you care about, join us.

Legislative Priorities that will be discussed by League specialists are: Education Reform, Financing, Health Care, Reproductive Rights and Transportation.

For more information, or to join fellow Newton Leaguers, contact Amelia Koch, 617-244-2647 or akoch-lwvn@rcn.com. ■

ACTION ALERT:

Help Still Needed to Move the Health Care Trust Bill Forward

The Massachusetts Health Care Trust bill, a longstanding League priority, has still not been voted on by the legislature's Health Care Committee. The League urges its members and other supporters of meaningful health care reform to contact their state senators and representatives to ask for their help in ensuring that the Health Care Committee gives this bill a favorable recommendation and moves it on to the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

Letters, telephone calls and e-mails to the Health Care Committee Co-Chairs, Sen. Richard Moore (617-722-1420; RMoore@senate.state.ma.us) and Rep. Peter Koutoujian (617-722-2130; Rep.PeterKoutoujian@hou.state.ma.us), would be especially helpful.

The Massachusetts Health Care Trust bill guarantees every Massachusetts resident first-class health care coverage by replacing the current patchwork of public and private health care plans with a uniform and comprehensive health plan. The Mass Health Care Trust bill, once enacted, will enable Massachusetts to have a single-payer, universal health care system – a system that will lessen the spiraling costs of health care in Massachusetts and will ensure that each Massachusetts resident will be entitled to high-quality health care. The Health Care Trust, appointed by the Governor, will have representation from consumers, professionals, and government. It will oversee the delivery of health care services to Massachusetts' residents; collect and disburse funds for the purpose of providing comprehensive health care for all residents of the Commonwealth; and negotiate or set fair and reasonable methods and rates of compensation with providers of medical services and with health care facilities, among other responsibilities.

This bill will:

- Be paid for by public and private monies already being pumped into our health care system and will effect economies through a simplified method of administration and the elimination of astronomical fees paid to administrators.
- Help us cope with our individual health care costs.
- Help employers (including the towns and cities in Massachusetts) reduce the fees they pay for the health care of their employees.
- Allow Massachusetts to be on a par with the industrial nations of the world (other than the United States) in providing health care for all its residents.
- Enable Massachusetts (along with Maine and its Dirigo plan) to be the first two of the seven states it is thought are needed as models to get universal, single-payer health care approved for our whole nation.
- Conform to the Health Care position that the League of Women Voters/MA adopted in 1993.

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LWVN Officers and Directors 2003-2004

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The LWVN Newsletter is published nine times per year. The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age. For more information about the League of Women Voters, call 617-964-0014.

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www.newtoncitizens.com/LWV

Unsung Heroes

Even when it seems like there's not a lot happening there is still a lot going on in the League! I want to talk to you about a few of the many people who help the League not by serving on the Board, but in many other ways.

Now that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has issued its ruling you might think that Holly Gunner might be able to ease up a little in her efforts on behalf of gays' and lesbians' right to civil marriage. Au contraire! It has been a time of increased vigilance. Last year Holly orchestrated a forum on the right to marry for the Newton League that was taped by NewTV. The Newton League has agreed to contribute to the distribution of the edited version to other Leagues in Massachusetts. This is a small item on Holly's list but the Newton League is proud of its contribution.

Speaking of NewTV, we are incredibly fortunate to work with Mike Padden-Rubin. Mike films the monthly Legislative roundtable through thick and thin. The legislators Ruth Balser, Kay Khan, Cynthia Creem and even Peter Koutoujian from time to time have been terrific about making this commitment each month. Catch this month's show that responds to questions from students in Newton North High School's Leadership class including an informative discussion about how the legislature will react on the issue of gay marriage. Thank you, Mike for the many times you have been there for us!

This month should see the completion of our updated League Handbook. Robin Maltz deserves our thanks for her careful work in putting this together. It's those quiet steady ones! Thank you, Robin and thank you for all of your work throughout the year maintaining our database.

I hope to see you this winter at one of our events or write us with comments at akoch-lwvn@rcn.com.

Amelia D Koch

Welcome New Member

MARJORIE D. MOERSCHNER
177 Forest Ave.
West Newton 02465
617-527-5613

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Health Care Trust Bill

In addition, call or write State Senator Creem and State Representatives Balser and Khan urging them to support this bill. For information on how to contact them, check your LWVN directory or go to LWVN's website at www.lwvma.org/govlegislative.shtml.

For further information regarding the League's Health Care initiatives, please contact Judy Deutsch, Health Care Specialist at 978-443-8609 or revjd@aol.com. ■

ENVIRONMENTAL SPEAKER SERIES

Co-sponsored by the

Green Decade Coalition/Newton,

The Newton League of Women Voters and

The Newton Free Library

“Sustainable Building Design in Newton”

The Green Decade Coalition/Newton and the Newton League of Women Voters are co-sponsoring this panel discussion on Sustainable Building Design. Using the Newton North High School construction project as a model, the program will examine how green building practices and technologies can be applied to municipal buildings to achieve resource and energy sustainability. Our panelists will discuss the importance and applicability of green building solutions.

- BARBRA BATSHALOM, Executive Director of The Green Roundtable
- DAVID DEL PORTO, of Ecological Engineering and owner of the Urban Ark, a sustainable home in Newton
- NICK PARNELL, City of Newton Public Building Commissioner
- BROOKE LIPSITT, Moderator and past President of the Newton Board of Aldermen

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23 AT 7:00PM

AT THE NEWTON FREE LIBRARY

Intersection of Walnut and Homer Streets - near City Hall

The public is invited free of charge.
Tea will be served.

Bring your own cup!

In Memory Of Sieglinde Martin

By Bonnie Carter

Sieglinde died peacefully at Mass General Hospital on Christmas day. She had been diagnosed with lymphoma in 1996 and stayed active until very recently. A member of the League of Women Voters for 40 years, she was active in the Newton League in the early 70's, serving as bulletin editor, and vice president. I remember her attending board meetings and taking note of what should be in the Bulletin. Very soon a new Bulletin would appear in my mailbox. I admired her quiet competence and organizational skills. She was a steadfast, level-headed person who wasn't afraid of hard work.

In 1975 she and her husband Ed moved to New Hampshire with the goal of becoming self-sufficient on their farm. She became "head farmer" taking responsibility for the animals, while Ed did the gardening. She also served as selectman in Rindge. In 1986 they moved to North Andover where she became active in the League and grew wonderful orchids.

Donations in her memory can be sent to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society or the Audubon Society. Birding was a love of her life.

Those of us who knew Sieglinde feel very fortunate that she came into our lives. Our condolences go to her family - Ed, her four children and three grandchildren. ■

Membership Application

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

- ☐ I would like to join the League of Women voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$50 payable to LWVN.
- ☐ Lifetime membership \$1000
- ☐ I would like to receive materials about the League.
- ☐ I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

☐ My Email address may be shared with State and National LWV

Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:
Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stony Brae Road,
Newton Highlands, MA 02461

Observer Notes

Election Commission

by Nancy Criscitiello

December 9, 2003

The Commission's meeting opened exactly at noon with Fay Cohen, Steven Smith, Fran Schaer present and David Mofenson presiding.

Peter Karg, Executive Secretary introduced Dede Forgione, Deputy Department Head, who has joined the staff from the Secretary of State's office where she has had extensive experience with electoral matters.

Peter felt that the preliminary and municipal elections went relatively well, given the new machines. Six training sessions were held with the machines and representatives from AccuVote present. These also included two sessions with Mary Walker from the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office with prospective inspectors. All sessions emphasized the importance of offering voters secrecy sleeves, completely filling in the ovals, and in-depth instructions on opening and closing procedures. Karg felt that the workers were feeling more comfortable with the new machines. Also with the help of the City's IT department, there was city-wide posting of results by 9:30.

Karg reported about 10 official complaints city wide, mostly having to do with the privacy of the polling stations. He has requested the custodians to allow more room when placing the voting stations.

In response to a question about the checking in and out process, Karg explained that it is mandated by the state, the reasoning centering around providing a close control of ballots cast.

Two rumors were put down: that the Mayor was in the counting room (*He did check in to see that all was going o.k.*) and that Susie Heyman was also "hanging around". Not true.

Four training sessions for the Primary will be held, 2 on February 24th & 2 on February 26th.

Karg reported on the new City Census format, which was designed to use less paper. Also he asked on the back of the envelope to have people check off if they would like to be poll workers for the next elections.*

A pilot program was started using NNHS students at four polling places to provide information to voters on how to use the machines. Karg thought it a great success; the Newton Taxpayers Association objected, fearing the kids would tell people how to vote!!! Karg has put the question before the Secretary of States Election Division for resolution.

* As of January 20, 2004, two hundred Newton residents have responded to this inquiry!■

March Unit Meetings

Voting Systems

By Ruth Neiberg

The American election system is in trouble. The cynicism is so deep that many people do not even show up at the polls. Only 37% of the electorate voted in the congressional elections of 2002. Political scientists and politicians are attempting to reinvigorate the system by advancing campaign finance reform, term limits, and voting by mail. According to polls, voters are disillusioned with the choices available to them, the negative campaigning and mud slinging, and the lack of discussion of the issues. Less than 44% of the electorate thinks elections are fair to the voter. Therefore, voting systems are being examined and discussed by political parties, States, and citizen action groups as possible ways to counter this alienation.

The Newton League will examine Voting Systems at our March Unit meetings. Bonnie Carter and Priscilla Leith will be topic Coordinators. You may read the background material from the LWVMA in this Newsletter and plan to attend during the day on March 10th or during the evening on March 11th.■

Voting Systems Used In Elections to a Single Office

By Carma Forgie, LWV Arlington for the Voting Systems Study Committee

A “voting system” defines the set of procedures used to elect people to an office. The particular system used is important because it determines not only how we vote but how the votes are counted, who is elected, who runs the government, what policies are passed, and who suffers and who gains from those policies. The voting system in use affects not only the amount of minority representation but also the faction(s) representing the majority as well as the range of candidates and choices available to all voters.

Plurality-majority System

Plurality is a system where the highest vote getter wins. If there are two candidates, the winner would have a majority. If there are more candidates, the winner may have a majority, but may have only a plurality. The oldest voting systems are those called ‘plurality-majority’. Britain was using plurality voting in the sixteenth century. European states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were becoming parliamentary democracies, and almost all used ‘plurality-majority’ voting systems. In Britain most election districts during this period were set up as two-member districts. It was not until 1885 that laws were passed making districts single-member ones.

The United States, following Britain, adopted plurality-majority voting, but not necessarily dividing a state into single-member districts. Until 1842, most of the states voted their entire congressional delegation as one statewide at-large district. In 1842, Congress legislated the use of single-member districts in order to prevent the election of all the representatives from one state from one area. In this system geographical representation is paramount, in contrast to parties or ideology.

Plurality-majority voting systems have the advantage of being simple, easy to use, and easy to understand – just mark the ballot for your preferred candidate. Count the votes and you have your winner.

Other single-member district systems are Two-Round Voting and Instant-Runoff Voting.

Two-Round Runoff System

Runoff voting systems are part of majority voting systems used to ensure that a winning candidate has a majority, not just a plurality. The most common is the Two-Round Runoff system that is used in nearly all southern states for their federal and state elections and for many local elections. In this system, if no one gets a majority in the first round of voting, a second election is held, and the two highest vote-getters in the first election are the only ones on the ballot in the runoff election.

Instant-Runoff System

Instant-runoff voting works as follows: when there are three or more candidates for an office, the voters rank the candidates as to their first, second, third, etc. choice. If no candidate receives a majority (50% plus 1) of the votes after the first count, a series of runoff counts is conducted as follows:

- The candidate who received the lowest number of votes is eliminated.
- Ballots that gave first place to the eliminated candidate are marked so that their original second choice is counted as first choice, the original third choice becomes second choice, etc.
- All ballots are then recounted.
- If this re-tabulation produces a candidate with a majority, then that candidate is the winner.
- If no candidate receives a majority, Steps 1 through 4 are repeated until a candidate with a majority is chosen.

We will discuss each of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these systems in preparation for future consensus meetings.



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LEITH, MBA**

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Committees - in - Action

E d u c a t i o n

Focus Renovations, increasing high school enrollments, school financing, testing & standards

Members Susie Heyman Robin Maltz
Andrea Kelley Fran Osten
Andrea Kozinetz Beverly Spencer
Anne Larner Beth Wilkinson

Contact Jody Klein, Chair ⁶¹⁷244-4767

E n v i r o n m e n t a l I s s u e s

Focus Promoting source reduction, and recycling programs in municipal offices and public schools

Members Deb Crossley Robin Maltz
Katherine Gekas Martha Richmond
Barbara Herson Sharyn Roberts
Beth Lowd Rohna Shoul

Contact Linda Walden, Chair ⁶¹⁷630-9538

H u m a n R i g h t s

Focus League outreach, relevance and support for the human rights of Newton's diverse populations

Members Sharon Balfour Susie Heyman
Linda Morrison

Contact Holly Gunner, Chair ⁶¹⁷964-0767

L o c a l A c t i o n

Contact Deb Crossley, Chair ⁶¹⁷244-7597

OBSERVER CORPS

Community Preservation Committee Deb Crossley
Jody Klein
Priscilla Leith

Election Commission Bonnie Carter
Nancy Criscitiello

Finance Committee, Board of Alderman Ruby Ajanee
Amelia Koch

Newton Citizens' Commission on Energy Deb Crossley,
LWVN Representative

Parks and Recreation Commission Priscilla Leith

Zoning and Planning Committee, Board of Aldermen Judy Jaffe

N o m i n a t i n g C o m m i t t e e

Members Pat Acton
Ruby Ajanee
Nancy Crowley

Contact Fran Seasholes, Chair ⁶¹⁷969-5927

You may call committee contacts or a Board officer or director to learn more about current committee work. All are welcome to participate.

LWVN CALENDAR

February

- 11 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Unit Meeting, Think Globally, Act Locally, at the home of Susan Rosenbaum, 121 Winslow Rd., Waban, Co-hostess Robin Maltz, 617-969-1554. Brown Bagging encouraged.
- 11 Deadline to Register to Vote or Change Party Enrollment for March 2, 2004 Presidential Primary. The Newton Election Commission will have extended hours until 8:00 p.m.
- 11 Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., Working Board Meeting/Newsletter Deadline at the home of Ruby Ajane, 161 Sumner St., Newton Centre, 617-243-9888
- 15 Sunday Evening, Democratic Presidential Primary debate sponsored by the LWVUS
- 23 Monday, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., Sustainable Building Design, a panel discussion on this current issue, co-sponsored with the Green Decade Coalition at Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library. Public Invited!

25 Wednesday, 7:15 p.m., Board Meeting at the home of Deborah Atwood, 17 Vineyard Rd., Newton Centre, 617-964-7374

26 Thursday, LWVM Day on the Hill, State House, Boston

March

- 2 Tuesday, PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY DAY, Polls Open 7 a.m.-8 p.m.
- 10 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Unit Meeting, LWVMA Voting Systems Study, at the home of Ruth Neiberg, 72 Dalton Rd., Newton Centre. 617-969-9329. Brown Bagging encouraged.
- 11 Thursday 7:39 -9:30 p.m., Unit Meeting, LWVMA Voting Systems Study, at the home of Bonnie Carter, 177 Homer St., Newton Centre, 617- 969-0686.
- 17 Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., Working Board Meeting/ Newsletter Deadline at the home of Bonnie Carter, 177 Homer St., Newton Centre, 617-969-0686



LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLE

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and check the
Blue Channel schedule

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