



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

MAY 2009

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ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

A lively group of League members and friends gathered at the Salvation Army Center on Monday, April 27, for the annual dinner meeting. The tasty buffet dinner, arranged for by Florence Smith and her team, was enjoyed by all. A table of handouts on various aspects of the health care issue also offered the new LWV brochure, "Crisis in America: Health Care," which will prove very helpful as the national discussion of this issue goes forward.

Before dessert, Maria Eisner chaired a brief business meeting. The budget and slate of officers proposed by the nominating committee for 2009-2010, were approved, and the new officers were introduced.

Rebecca Elgie introduced the program at 7:00pm. The subject for the evening, "Health Care Roundtable: Possible Solutions," was a follow up to the well-attended forum held on March 21, "Health Care 2009: Difficult Decisions Ahead." The energy and interest among the people gathered was palpable as the presentation on this vital issue, which is personal as well as communal, began.

Dan Lamb, District Representative to Congressman Maurice Hinchey, spoke first. Hinchey is a co-sponsor of HR676, the single-payer plan, and has spoken out often in support of this bill. He indicated that the climate in Washington is now more favorable than ever before for a positive change in health care, but Lamb explained that Hinchey may moderate his support of HR676 in the interest of getting Congressional approval for partial change, such

as Obama's plan which would offer both private and public insurance coverage. He feels that the stimulus package is a good start and will provide support. They hope to have a bill by the end of June and vote on it in July. He thinks it would include an employer mandate and an individual mandate as well as a public option which they think could eventually lead to a public plan for everyone. They would put in regulations of the insurance companies that would prohibit denials for prior conditions and there is need for cost controls, but there are few details yet about how it would work.

Professor John Kuder, a member of Dept. of Policy Analysis at Cornell explained the Massachusetts plan in a clear and informative power-point presentation. The goal was to keep value up and waste out and get the uninsured covered. This plan has been in effect for two years and includes strict mandates for health insurance coverage: those failing to purchase insurance, with or without a government subsidy, face a penalty. They have been successful in reducing the number of uninsured but it has cost more than they had expected. It has both an employer and individual mandate and Professor Kuder feels the plan which Congress chooses will be similar.

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Dr. Vivian Lorenzo is a family practitioner who also works for the Veterans Administration, Ithaca College and the State run Lansing Correction Facility. She called her talk "Single Payer, A Physician's Perspective." Lorenzo is a member of Physicians for a National Health Policy, a national group of over 16,000 members. Her power-point presentation showed the current dilemma in health care today and why single payer is the most efficient and cost-saving solution. She explained that they feel it is the only plan, and the one widely adopted by the rest of the world, that creates a level playing field and puts everyone in the same pool so that risk is shared equally and everyone is guaranteed comprehensive coverage.

The program was followed by questions and comments from the floor, moderated by Marnie Johnson, which opened up many aspects of this issue. It was obvious that the evening was a valuable experience for everyone present.

Fran Helmstadter

PROGRAM COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Program Committee and the League sponsored four general meetings since September '08. THE EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEE FAMILIES WHO SETTLE IN OUR COMMUNITY was held on Monday evening September 22, 2008. The four speakers were: Debra Virgo from Interfaith Works Center for New Americans in Syracuse; Cecelia Linscott of the Refugee Settlement Office in Ithaca; Peggy Robinson, Bilingual-Family Liaison for the Ithaca City School District; and Carol Whitlow, a sponsor of a large family from Burma. The speakers added interest and enjoyment by displaying colorful objects from the refugee's various cultures around the room. The evening ended with a lively discussion and informal conversation between the speakers and the audience, while enjoying desserts and beverages.

The next general meeting was initiated by the National Popular Vote Study Group. The group had met regularly for extensive research and study of the National Popular Vote Compact.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2008-09

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The purpose of the event was to learn from an expert who could add a new perspective and help the LWV of Tompkins County develop a consensus on the issue. On Monday evening, January 26, 2009 Professor Donald Beachler from Ithaca College, spoke on the topic of THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE to an audience of 27 League members and guests. Sunny Gooding, explained the National Popular Vote compact as an effort to ensure that the presidency goes to the candidate with the most votes nationwide without the need to amend the constitution. Professor Beachler talked about the development of the electoral college and the changes in attitudes concerning the fairness of our general elections for the past 200 years. Professor Beachler gave an interesting, informative talk using amusing anecdotes to highlight his main points.

The National Popular Vote Study Group sponsored a Consensus meeting on March 23.

The Leagues annual luncheon meeting was held at the Women's Community Building on Saturday March 7, 2009. All the School Superintendents in Tompkins County were invited to take part in a panel discussion on the topic: THE STATE BUDGET AND THE SCHOOLS. Five Superintendents participated: Sandra Sherwood-Dryden School District, Brenda Meyer-Groton Central Schools, Judith Pastel-Ithaca School District, Paula Hurley-Trumansburg Central Schools and Ellen O'Donnell-TST BOCES. (William Hurley from Newfield Central School District and Stephen Grimm of Lansing Central School District were unable to attend.) Marnie Johnston moderated the presentations and the question and answer period. Each superintendent spoke briefly about the particular concerns and tough decisions they are faced with while planning the upcoming fiscal year. The budget process is especially

difficult due to the economic difficulties and proposed cuts in the NYS Budget.

The Annual Meeting and Dinner was held on April 27th at the Salvation Army Worship and Service Center on Monday, April 27, 2009. The focus, HEALTH CARE ROUNDTABLE: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS, examined the pros and cons of the Massachusetts Plan, the Obama Plan and a Single Payer Plan as alternatives to our present system of financing the health care of U.S. Citizens. The speakers included: Dr. Vivian Lorenzo-Family Medicine Physician, and PNHP member; Dan Lamb-District Representative for Congressman Hinchey; and John Kuder-Dept. of Policy Analysis, Cornell University.

Thank you to all the speakers who contributed their time and expertise to inform and enrich members of the League and the community about timely and important issues. Thank you to the Board members who have entrusted me with the opportunity to serve as program committee chair. I look forward to another rewarding year.

Florence B. Smith
Vice President and Program

VOTER SERVICE

The ICSD Candidate forum that was to have been held on Thursday, May 7 at 7:00 in the Ithaca High School cafeteria has been canceled. We hope to reschedule it for next week, either Wednesday or Thursday. **Latest news: date is Wednesday, May 13.**

Voter Service representatives are planning to attend the Naturalization Ceremony to be held next Thursday, May 14 at the Court House. The League is always happy to welcome new citizens. We will have voter registration material at this event.

Debbie Levin

LWV-TC CALENDAR—2008-2009

7:00	Wed. May 13	CANDIDATES' FORUM—ICSD School Board	IHS Cafeteria
	Tues. May 19	SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS	
7:00	Mon. June 1	BOARD MEETING	Kathy Burlitch

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