



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

OF SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK

BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2012

OUR MISSION

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Diversity Policy

The League of Women Voters of Saratoga County, in both its values and practices, is committed to inclusion and diversity.

This means:

There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of economic position, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.

We recognize that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making.

We believe inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs.

We affirm our commitment to reflecting the diversity of Saratoga County.

PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Tuesday, February 21st, 7pm
Saratoga Springs Public Library**

Informational Session, including consensus questions and glossary, to help prepare you for the March 27th Consensus Meeting

Can we save taxpayer money by privatizing government services?

Have past efforts been successful?

What are the pitfalls? What are the gains?



**GUESS WHO'S COMING TO BREAKFAST
ON MARCH 10th...**

Save the date! She'll join us at the Gideon and give us some ideas about how to get things done! More on page 3, reserve on page 7.



**League of Women Voters
of Saratoga County (NY-639)**

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From the President –

It was so gratifying to see folks from around the Capital District show up at Skidmore for our program on the suppression of voting rights. (See Helen Crawshaw’s account on p. 5) Our foremothers understood the power of the vote and, in their name, the League is an organization committed to the protection of voting rights. And to be clear: The League doesn’t care HOW people vote; we just want all who are eligible to be *able* to vote without unnecessary hardship. At the LBJ Library in Texas just last December, Eric Holder, the Attorney General of the United States, said, “Honoring our democracy demands that we remove any and all barriers to voting - a goal that all American citizens of all political backgrounds must share.” Yet even the sponsor of the restrictive legislation, which is disenfranchising thousands in Florida, has admitted on national television that there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud in that state. I encourage you to visit www.lwvus.org for more information on this issue. We must remain vigilant.

The Skidmore forum was Part I of a two-part series our League is sponsoring on voting rights. On Tuesday, April 24 at 7pm at the Saratoga Springs Library, we will be presenting a program on ways to increase voter participation in New York State, such as modernization of voter registration, early voting systems, improved ballot design, poll worker training, and voter education. We’ll be reviewing what other states have done and how such initiatives might be implemented in NYS. We hope you’ll join us again that evening.

Well behaved women never make history! At our annual Famous Person Fundraiser, we thought it would be fun to bring back to life one of the original female hell-raisers, as she self-described. After losing her husband and four very young children to an epidemic in Tennessee, Mother Jones became a fiery orator and fearless organizer for children’s rights, social justice, and fair treatment of mine workers. Learn more about this woman once called The Most Dangerous Woman in America at this fun fundraiser at the Gideon Putnam breakfast on Saturday, March 10 at 9 am (see p3 and 7).

We’re happy to report that we continue to attract new members. Once you know what the League stands for, you just gotta be a part of it!

Onward! Pat

“The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”

Vice President Hubert Humphrey

STUDY OF PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES

By Clifford Ammon

Privatization is a world-wide phenomenon, exacerbated by the so-called “austerity” agenda, rampant in both the U. S. and Europe, to cut taxes and cut government budgets and services.

Our League continues to examine privatization of public resources, as part of the LWVUS nationwide consensus study. The membership consensus will take place on Tuesday, March 27, 2012 at 7:00 P.M., at the Saratoga Springs Public Library. This is turning out to be a very important study in terms of its potential effects on all of us.

There will also be an informational meeting, on Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at 7:00 P. M., at the SSPL. We’ll have people directly involved in various privatization processes discuss their pros and cons. We’ll hand out copies of the questions to be voted on at the consensus meeting, a glossary of terms relating to privatization, and other material. (These questions are considerably clearer and more direct than those of our recent consensus about education.)

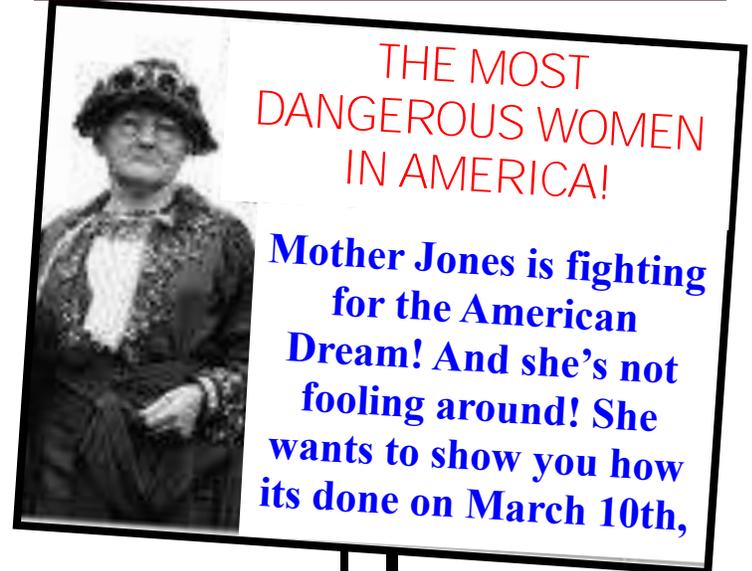
We will be looking into the comparisons of selling public assets vs. contracting out management and/or other services with continuing government supervision, the differences between for profit and non-profit arrangements, and other considerations. We’ll explore the ramifications of the influence, efforts, and finances put toward privatization by the American Legislative Exchange Council.

We’ll survey the 30-year effort to privatize the “entitlement” Social Security and the recent attempts to eliminate Medicare, putting personal medical safety back in private hands. How do you feel about for-profit companies handling state top secrets, prisons, hospitals, or state parks?

Members of the committee include Cliff Ammon, Donna Dadaris, Mary Marsicano, Lee Nelson, and new member, Anne Sheppard. Anne is an expert on nursing homes. She is zeroing in on Saratoga County’s consideration of shedding its Maplewood Nursing Home, an issue close to home and a good place for our members to start.

Want to become involved? Contact Cliff Ammon at cammon2@nycap.rr.com, or 587-4204.

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER March 10 at the Gideon Putnam



The barely five feet tall, Mother Jones, born Mary Harris in Ireland, sometime between 1830 and 1837, escaped the potato famine to Canada, learned dressmaking, moved to the U. S., married George Jones in Memphis, saw her husband and four children all die in a yellow fever epidemic, and her dressmaking business go up in flames in the great Chicago fire of 1871,

Later in her life, during the early decades of the 20th Century, Mary Harris Jones, became a fiery orator and fearless fighter for workers’ rights, justice and equality. She fought to enact and enforce child labor laws, women’s right to vote, and for labor movements all across the country, particularly the miners, where she became known as the “Miners’ Angel”. She also was known as “the most dangerous woman in America” by a U.S. district attorney, and “The grandmother of All Agitators” by the Senate. She died in 1930 at about 100 years of age.

Mother Jones re-enactor, Claire Nolan, teaches English as a second language at SUNY and is a professional story teller. She has acted with The Schenectady Theater for Children in the past and presently sits on its board of directors. She has also worked with Albany Civic Theater. On March 10th, Claire Nolan will remain in character as long as she is in costume.

This is our League’s only fundraiser. Each year. Funds raised are used to support our community outreach efforts. See page 7 for reservation coupon.

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

DIGNITY FOR ALL SPEECH

Excerpts from *Dignity for All* speech delivered by Patricia Nugent at the Martin Luther King, Jr. event

I represent an organization with roots back to the mid-1800's when women first banded together in this country to declare that they were people too under The Constitution and thus entitled to the same rights as men. The brave suffragists were spat upon, ridiculed, heckled, physically attacked, and denied lodging. In the early 1900's, they were thrown into prison for protesting outside the White House, so they practiced civil disobedience by refusing to eat—and tubes were forced down their throats... The right to vote was only one demand the suffragists identified at their Seneca Falls convention – what they really wanted was to be treated fairly and equally. What they really wanted was the right to retain their dignity. They had had enough of being treated like property, of being denied the basic rights of citizenship. It wasn't really about the vote; the vote was a means to an end.

Fast forward to the civil rights movement. Although perhaps best known in some circles as the struggle to be allowed to sit in the front of a bus or at counters in diners, we know it wasn't about that. It was a struggle for human dignity. A great leader emerged who told blacks and the downtrodden that they had worth. He showed the way to fight oppression and to challenge authority in a way that maintained the dignity of both sides...

And now fast forward to today. Civil discourse is becoming a thing of the past. As our future hangs in the balance, some political leaders seem bent on stripping each other of their dignity rather than tending to the people's business. There are forces afoot that would again try to steal our dignity by stealing our rights. There is innuendo, if not bold outright public statements, about minorities and their work ethic. Repealing civil rights legislation has been casually discussed on prime time interviews. Yes, today the attack on human dignity persists. ..

No one can take away our dignity. Nor do they give it to us. It's our birthright, and we must hang on tight. If we want dignity for all, we all have to work to protect our own and others' dignity. We cannot rest for one minute.



DIGNITY FOR ALL!

PHOTO: BILL CRAWSHAW

Clockwise: Library visitors enjoy the events of the celebration. Joanne Yepsen moderates the day. James Kates was the keynote speaker. Garland Nelson led us in song and games. Mayor Johnson spoke of community. Center: LWV of Saratoga County President, Patricia Nugent gave an inspiring talk about the struggle for dignity throughout our history. See next column for excerpts. Below: Pattie Garrett of LWV shares information with Rep. Tedisco.



VOTING SUPPRESSION

Right: Tim O'Brien, of LWVUS, filled us in on the movement around the country to suppress voting rights.

Below: Alice Green addresses the audience.



Losing Ground: Efforts to Suppress Voting Rights in the USA was presented by the LWV of Saratoga County, January 19, in the Gannett Auditorium of Skidmore College. Attended by approximately 100, the program was co-sponsored by the Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady County LWVs; Democracy Is for People, Malta, NY; Kindlon, Shanks & Associates; LWNYS; Presbyterian-New England Congregational Church; Saratoga Peace Alliance; Saratoga Vital Aging Network; Saugerties LWV; Skidmore Government Studies; Skidmore Religious & Spiritual Life; Upper Hudson Peace Action.

Patricia Nugent, our president, welcomed the audience and introduced the guest speaker.

Tim O'Brien, Project Manager for the Public Advocacy for Voter Protection, LWVUS, spoke about current efforts to suppress the vote in several states. He quoted Elisabeth MacNamara, president of LWVUS, "Today we are experiencing an unprecedented attack on voting rights. This assault on voters is sweeping across the country, state by state, and is one of the greatest self-inflicted threats to our democracy – our way of governing – in our lifetimes." Some states have laws requiring a voter ID. Some require proof of citizenship. Some states target groups who actively promote voter registration. Some states eliminate or shorten early voting provisions.

Mr. O'Brien predicts in 2012 there will be more laws enacted in, for instance, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, New Mexico, Virginia, Pennsylvania. LWVUS opposes the potential disenfranchisement of perhaps 5 million citizens and points out that millions of dollars have been spent – and more will be – when there is no need for such Draconian measures.

Voter suppression is impacting the very old, the disabled, the poor, and minorities. Leagues and grass roots organizations are active in pushing back. The Department of Justice is also involved in testing specific cases in which states must demonstrate there is no discriminatory purpose to new legislation.

Panelists responded to Mr. O'Brien and were also available to answer many questions from the audience. Dr. Alice Green, Executive Director of the Center for Law and Justice, Inc., pointed out that African Americans have had to deal with voting suppression throughout their history. She advocates more education, especially among the felon and parolee population.

Benita L. Law-Diao, member of AVillage, described how her father, growing up poor with no birth certificate, had his rights stymied when identification was required.

Willie J. White, founder of AVillage, strives to engage and empower his community. He was enthusiastic about possibilities of working with local Leagues.

Dr. Stanley J. Yake, board member of the Capital Region NYCLU board, talked about voting as fundamental to the democratic process and as a reflection of participation in our community. Our democratic ideals rest on moral ideals of community.

Betsey Swan, President of LWNYS, talked briefly about what is going on in NY State. Glitches in the new voting method resulted in over voting because the paper ballot was confusing to some. We need more ease in voting, she said.

By Helen Crawshaw



The line to ask a question extended up the aisle.

League of Women Voters of Saratoga County

Barbara K. Thomas Award

In Honor of One Who Made A Difference"

Barbara K. Thomas Scholarship Award

Your Contributions at Work: The League of Women Voters of Saratoga County is pleased to announce the Barbara K. Thomas Award. The award of \$1200 is to be given to a senior graduating from a public high school in Saratoga County in 2012.

This award is being presented in honor of Ms. Thomas who served as the President of the Saratoga County League for more than 20 years. Under her presidency, the local league achieved a measure of success and strength that made it one of the premier leagues in the State of New York.

The award, open to both male and female students who will attend either a two or four year college, will be based on scholastic achievement, community service, leadership and commitment to the League's guiding mission.

Applications can be downloaded from our website at lwvsaratoga.org.



LWV BOOK CLUB

On Tuesday, Feb. 7th we will continue to look at Representative Government Issues, examining Citizens Right to Know, Individual Liberties, Reproductive Choice, Congress, and The Presidency. This will complete this topic.

We will meet at the Clifton Park Halfmoon Library. We have great discussions and you will learn more about your League. Meeting time is 1pm.

The Clifton Park/Halfmoon Library is on Moe Road in Clifton Park, and there is plenty of parking. As always, check in case of bad weather, to be sure the library is open !

On March 6 at 1pm, at SSPL, we will review all of the positions which fall under International Relations, and then we will look at the many Natural Resources positions in the Spring.

The April 3rd Book Club will meet at SSPL.

Everyone is welcome, and you can email Francine at aerodger@aol.com or call her at 371-8032 for more information.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

National Legislative Priorities Submitted to LWVUS

On behalf of our membership, the board submitted the following legislative priorities to the League's national office for its consideration for 2012 advocacy: campaign finance reform, protection of voting rights, global warming prevention, hydrofracking ban, universal health care. We should soon know the national results.

We thank those who contributed to the discussion. Please continue to talk with us about any local priorities you'd like your board to explore further

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If you would like to go paperless, please notify The BULLETIN at: mammon1@nycap.rr.com. Be sure to include your E-Mail address. We'll send it to you as an attachment PDF file each month that we publish....and in color.

In Memorium Robert W. Thomas

Long time League member, Bob Thomas died quietly at home, January 18, after a long struggle with brain cancer. His wife of 54 years, former League President Barbara Thomas, was by his side.

Bob was a meteorologist, first with the Air Force and then for 30 years with the National Weather Service. Bob was an avid outdoorsman all his life.

Bob served as Bulletin Circulation Editor for many years and surveyed polling place accessibility. He enjoyed League potlucks, LWVNY events and Walk & Talk with the LWV.

A celebration of Bob's life was held on January 29th, where songs and poems, hand picked by Bob himself for the occasion, were sung and shared.

Our apologies to the family of Charlotte Justin for misreporting her death date as September 12. It should have read December 12, 2011.

Observer Corps

By Margie H. Van Meter

The Saratoga County board of Supervisors will be led by Supervisor Thomas Wood of Saratoga again this year. In his opening statement for the year 2012, he stated that the two issues which the county board will need to address are planning for the Maplewood Manor and the county landfill.

Since that meeting, two committees recommended that the Board contract with Gerhardt LLC of Utica to conduct a 12-18 month study of the county's options for the landfill, and the board approved the contract.

At the end of January, the League's Observer Corps and other interested Leaguers met to discuss ways to alert League members to county issues. The second part of the meeting was with County Administrator, Spencer Hellwig.

It may be of interest to League members that the Board of Supervisors still uses a weighted voting system for the Board. The town of Halfmoon supervisor has the most votes in a county Board meeting with 21,535 votes. The supervisor from Day has the fewest votes, 856. The two Clifton Park supervisors share 36,706 votes. The two Saratoga Springs share 26,586 votes in board meetings. The votes held in the Board committees are not weighted.

If you are interested in attending one or more committee meetings, a general Board meeting, or any other government meeting, contact me. If you have a League button, wear it and tell the chair who you are. In addition, tell the observers and me. Share your impressions of our county government.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

To LWVSC:

Cliff & Margot Ammon
Sheelagh & Fred Baily
Frank Berlin
Judy Coburn
Helen & Bill Crawshaw
Jean-Marie Crocker
Donna Dardaris
Amy Durland &
Robert Mains
Carol Fleming
Patricia Fox
Millie Green
Florence Harshe
Deirdre Leland
Michael Moore

Barbara Murphy
Lee Nelson
Anne Palamountain
Josie & Bob Pasciullo
Marian Potter
Elaine & Kenneth
Schick
Barb & Bob Thomas
Diane Whitburn

To Education Fund:

Adirondack Trust Co.
Jane Bouchard
Ann & Michel Kril
Patricia Nugent
Helen & David Porter

IF LWV DOESN'T SPEAK UP, WHO WILL?

Wel come New Members

Cynthia Corbett

Susan Demick

Jake Davis

Diana O'Brien

Reserve by March 1st for your date with Mother Jones
on March 10th, 9am at The Gideon Putnam

Name _____

Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

Address _____

Breakfast: How many _____ x \$50=\$ _____

*Optional donation

Marcher (your choice) \$ _____

Organizer: \$25 \$ _____

Hell Raiser: \$50\$ _____

Total \$ _____

*Please make check payable to LWVNYEF. Your contribution is tax deductible except for \$25 fair value of the event per person attending. Receipts will be provided at the door.

Mail your check to: Diane Whitburn,
11 N. Hill Drive, Ballston Lake, NY 12019

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 7, Tuesday, Book Club, CP/HM Library, 1pm

Feb.21, Tuesday, Privatization Forum, SSPL, 7pm

March 6, Tuesday, Book Club, SSPL, 1pm

March 10, Saturday, Brunch with Mother Jones Gideon Putnam, 9—12noon Annual Fundraiser

March 27, Tuesday, Consensus on Privatization of Governmental Services SSPL, 7pm

April 3, Tuesday, Book Club, SSPL, 1pm

April 24, Voter Participation



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SARATOGA COUNTY P.O. BOX 1029 SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY 12866

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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GET INVOLVED ! GIVE 2 HOURS A MONTH TO THE OBSERVER CORP Contact Margie VanMeter, 587-1545

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