



BULLETIN

MARCH 2012

MOTHER JONES: A DANGEROUS WOMAN

This is our annual fundraiser, used to support our educational programming. We hope to see you there!



MARCH 10 9am to 11am
At the Gideon Putnam

Deadline extended to March 7th.
Seats may still be available .
See coupon page 7 or call 728-0237.

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.

MARCH 27TH - 7PM

Prestwick Chase - Saratoga Springs

Directions on page 7

Members, this is your opportunity to make a difference! Your vote is required to help the League reach consensus on one of the most important issues of our time.

READ THE CONSENSUS QUESTIONS ON PAGE 3

When is privatization of government services, appropriate and when is it not?

YOU DECIDE!



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

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www.lwvsaratoga.org Phone: 728-0237

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All phone numbers in 518 area code, unless noted

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From the President—

The League is never at rest! We are now gearing up for our annual fundraiser, consensus report, voter participation project, and school board elections. The reason we are so busy is that we are one of the few (maybe only) non-partisan political organizations that deals with a broad spectrum of issues. While many organizations advocate for a single cause, the LWV offers its members one-stop shopping, with

over 50 stated positions on national and international issues. These positions are succinct and well reasoned. I encourage you to check them out at www.lwvus.org.

On a somewhat related note, I finally got around to writing a will. (Do you know that only 1/3 of us ever do that?) It's a sobering experience, forcing you to reconsider your attachment to material goods and to try to influence your legacy while you still can. The lyrics to the Phil Ochs' song, *When I'm Gone*, came to mind:

*And I won't breathe the bracing air when I'm gone
And I can't even worry 'bout my cares when I'm gone
Won't be asked to do my share when I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here.*

I decided to leave some money to three organizations – the LWVSC being one of them. The issues we all care about will sadly outlast us, but we can keep working on them when we're gone through a legacy donation. Think about joining me; even a small amount can make a big difference to a volunteer organization.

I'm happy to report that the legislative priorities our League recommended to LWVUS were mirrored in those adopted at the national level: Voter Protection; Campaign Finance; Environmental Defense; and Health Care Defense. Also, on the national Watch List are Fair Taxation; Gender Discrimination; UN Support; and Immigration. You can expect our League to schedule programs on these issues next year. Volunteer to help pull one together!

Our League has received some very complimentary correspondence both from LWVNYS and LWVUS, thanking and commending us for the programs we ran this year. It's amazing what we can do when we all work together. Thank you for your contributions to the effort.

Pat

Welcome New Members

Deborah Lakritz

Sandy Shein

Phyllis S. Olsen

Judy Staubo

William J. McTygue

PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES CONSENSUS MARCH 27TH—Prestwick Chase

Please read through these questions and think about them even before you get to the Consensus Meeting, March 27th— 7pm, at Prestwick Chase.

Privatization Study Consensus Questions Introduction:

Federal, state and local governments own extensive assets and are major employers. Governments often consider selling assets, and outsourcing some functions and services to the private sector, including “core” government services such as providing for the safety, security and general welfare (public well-being) of citizens, the economy, and our country. Privatization of these government assets, services and functions has been occurring for decades at all levels of government. The consequences of “privatizing” a government service or function, in particular, may enhance the function or service. Alternatively, it may reduce or alter functions and services. Government revenues may be reduced or lost and jobs may be cut. In some instances, this may have a detrimental effect on the “common good” or public well-being.

One state, for instance, has declared as a matter of state law and policy that “using private contractors to provide public services formerly provided by state employees does not always promote the public interest. To ensure that citizens... receive high quality public services at low cost, with due regard for tax payers...and the needs of public and private workers, the (legislature) finds it necessary to regulate such privatization contracts throughout the state.”

The purpose of this study is to identify policies and parameters that should be considered when any governmental entity is planning to undertake some type of privatization process.

PRIVATIZATION CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

Consensus questions one and two should be presented to the group at the outset of the meeting and then repeated after the other questions have been answered.

1. As a general matter, the extent to which government functions, services and assets have been privatized in the past decade is:

Much too much Too much About right
 Too little Much too little No consensus

2. Core government services and functions important to well-being of the people should remain with government and not be transferred to the private sector.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

3. As a matter of good government policy, which of the following criteria should be applied when making decisions to transfer government services, assets and

functions to the private sector?

For each of the following points indicate

High priority Lower priority Not a priority
 No consensus

- a. **Transparency and Accountability:** All government contracts with private companies for services must ensure public access to relevant records and information regarding contracted services, functions and assets and provide for adequate government oversight and control.
 - b. **Public Well-being:** Provisions are in place to assure that, in the event any public services are to be privatized, there will be no increased risks to public well-being, especially to vulnerable populations.
 - c. **Cost and Quality:** Privatized services should not appreciably increase the costs or decrease the quality of services to the public.
 - d. **Environmental and Natural Resources:** Defined parameters should be in place to assure that environmental and natural resources are not compromised.
 - e. **Contracts and Sales of Public Assets:** All government contracts and privatized public assets should be subject to competitive bidding and comply with all laws regarding awarding contracts.
 - f. **Economic Impact:** Privatization should not result in a negative economic impact on the communities in which the services are provided.
 - g. **Government Recovery of Services and Assets:** Provisions should be in place to recover key services, assets and functions should the private sector fail to safeguard them.
4. **Privatization is not appropriate** (for each point indicate Agree Disagree No Consensus)
- a. When the government lacks the will, ability or resources to adequately oversee contracts with the private entity and any successor thereto.
 - b. When there is no private entity able or willing to provide the service for the short and long term.
 - c. When it poses a potential threat to national security.
 - d. When it poses a risk to personal or security data.
 - e. When there has been evidence of potential corruption.
 - f. When the private entity’s goals and purposes are not compatible with public well-being.
 - g. When the private entity has not complied with existing government requirements for public records, open meetings or publication of reports and audits.
 - h. When a loss of revenue decreases government support for mandated or critical services.

Continued next page

Continued from page 3

5. Some states have developed laws and regulations to control the process of privatization within their jurisdictions.

- As a general matter, should privatization be regulated?
- a. Yes, all privatization efforts should be regulated.
 - b. Yes, some types of privatization efforts should be regulated.
 - c. No, privatization efforts should never be regulated
 - d. No consensus

6. Which of the following should be included in the regulatory process when privatizing public assets, services and functions? For each point indicate

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus
- a. Timely public announcements regarding intentions to privatize and the clear and measurable expected benefits to the public
 - b. Public and stakeholder (investors, shareholders, experts) input into the decision and terms of the contract.
 - c. Feasibility study regarding performance, costs and benefits.
 - d. Adherence to all laws regarding public contracts..
 - e Transition plans for displaced employees.
 - f. Accountability and transparency provisions in all contracts.
 - g. Regular performance evaluations including meaningful opportunity for public comment.
 - h. Provisions for transferring services and assets back to the government or another contractor in the event of inadequate performance.
 - i. Adequate resources for enforcement.



Donna Dardaris, Cliff Ammon (chair) and Lee Nelson headed the discussion.

The February 21st meeting of the Privatization Study group at SSP Library brought out an animated group of interested people. The discussion focused on health care, prisons and hospitals, public and private. More information and examples will be offered at the next meeting where we will try to reach consensus. The consensus will be on March 27th, 7pm at Prestwick Chase. Your input and vote are needed for a successful consensus.

Hope to see you there.

KUDOS TO PAT REED

Active, energetic Patricia Reed, a winner of our League's Carrie Chapman Catt Award, can't seem to stop reaping honors. Pat has recently received the Nurse Practitioner of the Year Award, for 2011, from the Nurse Practitioner Association (NPA). She adds this tribute, also, to her Secretary's Hands and Heart Award from the Department of Veterans Affairs, for excellence and care of war veterans.

Ms. Reed received this prestigious award for excellence in service to the Capital Chapter, NPA and community education on single payer universal health care, as well as demonstrated excellence in clinical practice.

Pat worked as a Nurse Practitioner at Stratton Veterans Administration Medical Center for over two decades. She also was Vice President and Executive Director for Nursing at Albany Medical Center and implemented the AAMC/Regents College Project L. E. A. R. N.—BSN Program, the only non-traditional BSN education program for working nurses in New York.

Patricia Reed has served our league and the cause of Universal Health Care for many years.

CONGRATULATIONS!



GETTING OUT THE VOTE

EARLY VOTING....

SAME DAY REGISTRATION....

OPEN PRIMARY....

We have all heard these words on the news, but they have no place in NY State voting. Should they? Join us on Monday, April 30th at the Clifton Park Halfmoon Library as we examine what other states do in the area of voting and registration. Could adopting any of these ideas nudge NY State up from 47th place in voter participation nationwide?

SAVE THE DATE! April 30th. See you there.

Mary Marsicano / In Memoriam

Our steadfast member, activist, artist and friend Mary Marsicano passed away suddenly February 20th. She was a member of the Privatization committee and served with energy and enthusiasm. Our condolences to her family. A Memorial Service is planned for mid-March, TBA

NY'S REDISTRICTING QUANDARY WHAT'S A LEAGUE TO DO?

By Barbara Murphy, Good Government Liaison

Redistricting is the process of drawing electoral district boundaries, in response to population changes determined by the results of the Census. In New York, the state legislature is in charge of congressional and state legislature redistricting, and the governor has veto power over the final plan. New York's legislature appoints 6 members, in an advisory-only capacity, to the Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR).

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo introduced legislation to create an independent commission to redraw the boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts, promising to end the longstanding Albany practice of protecting incumbent lawmakers through creatively drawn districts. Mr. Cuomo's bill would put redistricting in the hands of a bipartisan panel that he said would be free of close ties to the Legislature or other conflicts of interest. The bill has not been considered, and the governor has said he would veto a redistricting plan put forth by the Legislature not following good government principles.

Meanwhile, a federal judge has ordered an earlier primary date to ensure sufficient time for military absentee ballots to be mailed, received and counted in the general election. New York's non-presidential primary for 2012 will be held on June 26, 2012 (a date no later than 35 days prior to the 45-day advance deadline set by the MOVE Act for transmitting ballots to the State's military and overseas voters, i.e., at least 80 days before the November 6, 2012 federal general election.)

LATFOR only released the legislature's redistricting plans the first week of February. The plan is business as usual, or worse, ignoring good government rules in favor of the gerrymandering process of protecting incumbents.

Pennsylvania faced a similar situation. In a victory for citizens' power, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on Feb. 3rd directed a state commission to draw up a new reapportionment plan for state legislative districts that hews more closely to all constitutional mandates.

New York has its own powerful non-partisan, citizen-power representation in the efforts of Common Cause NY, which has set up a website where citizens can have input in drawing district lines.

(See citizensredistrictny.org/reform-maps.)

The Common Cause reform maps were drawn according to the following criteria:

- Respect one-person, one-vote by drawing state legislative districts with a population deviation of no more than +/- 3% from ideal value, with a mean deviation for the whole plan within 1%.
- Compliance with Federal Voting Rights Act.
- Respect communities of interest by drawing districts that reflect the social, cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic interests common to the population of the area.
- Traditional redistricting factors: contiguity, compactness and respect for county, city, town, village, and school district lines when possible.
- Following an "incumbent blind" process and one that does not seek to advantage any particular political party in drawing the lines.
- Re-allocating incarcerated persons back to their districts of last residence

LWVNYS has issued a statement in opposition to the reapportionment document drawn by the NYS Legislature presented by LATFOR. Many local Leagues are in support of an even stronger position and action than that expressed in the LWVNYS statement. We need to not only urge the Governor to veto this latest attempt at gerrymandering boundaries but to encourage the adoption of the neutral, non-partisan plan put forth by Common Cause NY.



Save the Date...

JUNE 2nd, 2012, Saturday

our League's Annual Meeting and

our Speaker, Tracy Brooks,

CEO of Family Planning Advocates

All this takes place at the Marriott Courtyard, Saratoga Springs, starting at 9am. Details and reservation information in the April Bulletin.

Our LeaderSpark youth leadership training program for 2012 has been cancelled due to lack of funds. We are hopeful grants can be obtained next year so that we can offer this program again in 2013.

Jacob Devasagayam is this year's Inside Albany attendee from our league. He was a participant in last year's LeaderSpark program from Ballston Spa High School. He will be attending LWVNYS conference for high school students at the State Capital.

OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

All the current observers were able to attend the Observer Meeting in late January and meet Spencer Hellwig, the County Administrator. We again informed him of our concern that the agendas for committee meetings need to reach the public before the meeting day. We have heard from a few other members who are planning to attend county meetings and join our forces. We hope that our presence will be helpful to the County Board as well as to League members.

Based on the message the Supervisors received at the 2011 Budget hearing, the Supervisors appear to be focused on finding ways to save money for county tax payers.

At the **Legislative and Research Committee** meeting, 11 items were reviewed which would ask for state assistance with budget problems affecting our county, asking the state to eliminate one of the three projected primary elections for 2012, asking for a greater proportion of the public safety surcharge on wireless phones to help pay for public safety in the county, more access for local governments in procurement cooperation beyond the state's OGS system. Apparently individual supervisors are seeking other opportunities for the county to save money.

The **Technology Committee** discussed several computer based issues and their current solutions which would help the county save money as well as make communications easier and faster for employees in various departments. Another issue they discussed was cost saving measures vis a vis all the county clocks and time cards.

There is already a plan to hire a consultant to recommend options to save money on the landfill and there is also a **Health Committee** subgroup which is looking into hiring a consultant to recommend options to reduce the county's costs with regard to Maplewood. Our observers will be watching this closely in the coming months.

Racing Committee: Todd Shimkus, Chamber of Commerce CEO, and a delegation of board members from the Harness Horsemen's Association spoke about the importance of the horse racing industry [both thoroughbred and standard bred] to the economic welfare of Saratoga County. Indeed, it has a major impact on a multi-county surrounding area. While VLTs are having a positive impact on the

purses of both tracks, the table game proposal being promoted by the governor could be a detriment to our area unless the games are tied to racing venues. The committee is monitoring the proposal very carefully.

This February Arthur Wright (Hadley), chair **Public Health Committee**, reported that the Maplewood Manor subcommittee (established in 2011 by Board of Supervisor Chairman T. Wood) has met 5-6 times. Members are: Supervisors Wright, Kinowski (Stillwater) and A. Johnson (Wilton).

Last September the PHC approved revised Maplewood Manor Public Health Policy and Procedures to strengthen payment practices for nursing home care and reduce bad debt (unpaid for care). These policies and procedures were approved by the **Law & Finance Committee** and implemented October 1, 2011.

The subcommittee has met with other NYS county administrators to explore nursing home operation. Some counties plan to continue operating the County Nursing Home while others plan to transfer ownership to a non-county entity. Subcommittee also met with the executive directive of NYSAC.

The subcommittee is completing an RFP (request for proposal) to use in selecting a consultant to explore ALL options regarding operation of Maplewood Manor. RFP is expected to be completed this week. Goal is to select a firm by March, 2012. Consultant report is expected to take 4-6 months.

Contrary to rumors, no decisions have been made about the future of Maplewood Manor as the county nursing home. Supervisor Wright will provide updates monthly at PHC. Goal is open communication.

At the **Social Programs Committee**, Bob Christopher gave a historic evaluation of the last 15 years on Preventive Programs for Children. In it he pointed out: from 1997 to 2011 the number of children in placement has dropped from 161 to 49 and costs of services from \$12.3million (in 2012 dollars) in 1997 to \$4.3million in 2011. This was achieved by shifting from foster care and group homes to the family home placement, and providing a case manager, and preventive services for both the child and the family.

Results: A savings of \$68M if placement had remained at the 1997 model.

Contributors to this article: Margie Van Meter, Terry Lowenthal, Pat Reed,



LWV BOOK CLUB

On Tuesday, March 6th we will continue to look at our International Issues: United Nations, Trade, Relations with Developing Countries, Arms Control, and Military Policy and Defense Spending.

We will meet at the Saratoga Springs Library. We continue to have great discussions and you will learn more about your League. Meeting time is 1pm.

As always, in case of bad weather, check to be sure the library is open !

In April we will begin to review all of the positions which fall under our Natural Resources.

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

Deadline March 30 for the

Barbara K. Thomas Scholarship Award of \$1200. If you know an eligible high school senior, please encourage him/her to visit our website www.lwvsaratoga.org to get the details and the application.

Why Are We Reviving Mother Jones?

Because the causes she cared about 100 years ago - prohibiting child labor, protecting workers' rights and voting rights, and miner safety - are all still of concern and in the news today! Plan to attend our Mother Jones breakfast on Saturday, March 10 -- to honor the past and to work toward a better future.

Call 728-0237 to reserve NOW!

Deadline extended to March 7 for your date with Mother Jones on March 10th, 9:30Sam at The Gideon Putnam

Name _____

Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

Address _____

*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.

Thanks To Our Contributor

LAURA CHODOS

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO
ADIRONDACK TRUST
FOR THEIR UNDERWRITING OF THE
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA.**

DIRECTIONS TO PRESTWICK CHASE FROM SARATOGA SPRINGS

From Broadway, in Saratoga Springs, at City Hall/ Adirondack Trust, turn West onto Church St. Go through two stop lights and an angled turn on Church St. Next block is Seward St. If you hit the Hospital, you've gone too far. Turn North (only way) on Seward. .5 mile to stop sign at Clement St. Continue straight - Seward turns into Denton Road and soon veers West. .5 mile to R. R. underpass and Bloomfield Rd. Go pass open fields and Five Oaks horse farm 1.2 miles to Saratoga St. This is the entrance to Prestwick Chase. Turn North (only way) .3 mile to guard house. Turn left, or West. Administration Bldg. is the middle one spouting a canopy with green columns at its entrance. Park. Enter building. Take elevator on right to 2nd floor to Congress Hall.

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

*Optional donation

Marcher (your choice) \$_____

Organizer: \$25 \$_____

Hell Raiser: \$50\$_____

Total \$_____

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

March 10, Saturday, Breakfast with Mother Jones, The "Most Dangerous Woman In America", Gideon Putnam Hotel, 9am.\$50, reservations required.

March 27, Tuesday, Consensus on Privatization of Government Services. Prestwick Chase, SS 7pm

April 2, Tuesday, Book Club, SSPL, 1pm

April 30, Monday, Increasing Voter Turnout, CP/HM Library, 7pm

June 2, Saturday, Breakfast Buffet and Annual Meeting, Marriott Courtyard, SS, 9am



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SARATOGA COUNTY

P.O. BOX 1029 SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY 12866

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

March 2012

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GET INVOLVED ! GIVE 2 HOURS A MONTH TO THE OBSERVER CORP

Contact Margie VanMeter, 587-1545

JOIN US & MAKE A DIFFERENCE

THE BULLETIN IS FREE WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP

- YES! I Would like to join the League. 2012 dues enclosed. \$50. Individual \$75 Family \$20 Student
Please send more information. Non-members may subscribe to the BULLETIN for \$15., enclosed.
In addition, I would like to contribute \$ Send a gift membership to:

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY
STATE ZIP PHONE (home) (work)
E-MAIL