



THE MASSACHUSETTS VOTER

October 2003

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

Volume 79, Number 4

Fall Conference Focuses on Health & Liberty

By Madhu Sridhar
LWVM PRESIDENT

Massachusetts faces a health care crisis of unprecedented proportions. Our health care system costs too much, cover too little and exclude too many, while many of our world-renowned medical institutions face staggering financial losses.

The complex and intransigent problems of the health care system, especially two root causes of the health care mess – reckless pricing and unnecessary administrative complexity – need to be addressed and need to be addressed now. A recent report commissioned by the Massachusetts Legislature found that nearly 40 cents of every dollar we spend for health care goes to administrative overhead. Considering \$41.5 billion was spent on health care in Massachusetts in 2002, \$16 billion could have been better spent providing care to those without health insurance, a number that continues to rise.

The League of Women Voters believes that every American should have equal access to affordable, quality health care. Yet today, over 41 million Americans are without health insurance coverage. Eight million of these are children. The United States outspends the world on medical care, but still remains the only industrialized country that does not offer health coverage to all its citizens. The World Health Organization ranked the United States 37th in the world in overall health system performance.

Health care is a complex issue indeed. But complexity is no excuse for inaction. Solving the health care crisis will require a broad and sustained commitment from our political leaders, from health care providers and financiers, and from the public.

The League of Women Voters continues to work to help find solutions to this difficult problem. The health care crisis is the primary topic of our upcoming Fall Conference, offering League members and the

public an opportunity to learn more about this important public policy issue. The conference is being held on Saturday, October 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Renaissance Bedford Hotel in Bedford.

The morning session – “Fixing Our Broken Health Care System: Incremental or Comprehensive Change?” – will focus on solutions for the health care crisis and debate the need for comprehensive versus incremental changes. The conference’s keynote speaker is Congressman John Tierney of the Massachusetts 6th Congressional District. One of Rep. Tierney’s priorities is to provide quality health care to all Americans.

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Fixing Our Broken Health Care System: Incremental or Comprehensive Change?

By Barbara Sullivan
MEMBER, LWVM HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE

“Fixing our Broken Health Care System: Incremental or Comprehensive Change?” is the theme of this year’s LWVM Fall Conference.

This conference will provide those attending with valuable information about an issue that has become a hot topic and is prominent on the radar screens of government and health industry officials and the public. Policy makers at all levels are now grappling with the myriad prob-

lems in the current system and seek ways to “fix the broken system,” which many believe will “implode” if serious steps are not taken in the near future to address the issues.

By becoming more knowledgeable about the issues, conference attendees will be able to “join the debate” as the 2004 election season begins.

While most would agree that the United States provides the finest medical care in the world, few would disagree that the current system is in need of extensive repair. Hundreds of thousands of citizens are uninsured or underinsured, health care costs are rising steeply, hospitals are closing and emergency rooms are struggling to keep up with the influx of patients, inadequate nursing staff in hospitals is resulting in medical errors, and there is general dissatisfaction of health care professionals working in the system.

Acknowledging the plight of the uninsured, at the federal level the Clinton administration in the 90’s made an attempt to establish a new system to provide coverage for everyone. The plan failed for several reasons, but mainly because of organized resistance by special interest groups.

Since then, reform efforts have shifted to the states, with many advocacy groups involved in proposing various reforms.

In Massachusetts, several attempts have been made over the last two decades to improve the system—the Dukakis administration employer-based system of financing, which was repealed in the 90’s in exchange for establishing a financing system to cover children (CHIP); Governor Cellucci’s Health Care Task Force which represented all the major stakeholders in the health care system (except consumers) which met over a period of two years, identified extensive problems in the system and made

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2003 FALL CONFERENCE
Fixing Our Broken Health Care System
Renaissance Bedford Hotel
44 Middlesex Turnpike, Bedford

9:00 a.m. – Registration and coffee
9:30 a.m. Keynote Speaker: Congressman John F. Tierney
10:00 a.m. Panel Discussion with:

Marcia Angell, MD, Harvard Medical School Department of Social Medicine
Michael S. Dukakis, Professor of Political Science, Northeastern University
Christine F. Ferguson, Commissioner, Department of Public Health
Dr. Alan Sager, Director, Health Reform, Boston University School of Public Health

Moderated by **Lisa Hughes**, WBZ-TV 4 news anchor

Noon: Lunch by reservation, see form on p. 8
Featured Luncheon Speaker: **Carol Rose**

Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts
Individual Liberties & the USA Patriot Act

1:30-3:30 p.m. Workshops and Speakers

Equitable Delivery of Health Care Services, Jackie Jenkins-Scott
What People Need to Know About Pending Health Care Legislation, Senator Steven Tolman
A Healthy Life Begins with a Healthy Environment, Brent Baeslack, Suzanne Sullivan, & Meleah Houseknecht
Real Choice, New Voices: Other Voting Systems, Prof. Douglas J. Amy
The USA PATRIOT Act and Individual Liberties, Carol Rose

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Madhu Sridhar
LWVM President

Make Your Voices Heard ... Say No to Gambling

It's with a strong sense of urgency that I write this column. Few votes in the Legislature will have such lasting effects on the state's economic, cultural and social fabric as will this fall's probable vote in the state Senate on legalizing slot machines and casinos in Massachusetts. Since you play an influential role in shaping public opinion in your communities, this issue needs your serious attention and energy.

With budget deficits looming in Massachusetts, exploring alternative revenue sources is understandable. Invariably, proposals to legalize casinos and slot machines surface, promoted as a source of revenue for the state and local communities. However, legislators should not be solving budget gaps with voluntary losses of money by their most gullible constituents. Gambling is no substitute for an equitable tax system or a reasonable tax policy. Gambling revenues are an inequitable and regressive kind of tax as well as a poor, unreliable and unpredictable source of revenue.

The estimated \$400 million to be raised in "new revenues" by legalizing slot machines in Massachusetts will mostly come from working families and senior citizens. Gamblers will have to lose over \$2 billion for the state to reap \$400 million in revenue. Out-of-state residents will contribute a small percentage of the slot revenue but the major portion of the money will come from Bay State residents; research indicates that 85% of the gambling patrons in states with slot machines live locally within 45 minutes.

It has been argued that casinos provide ancillary economic benefits, particularly jobs, for the communities in which they are set. Although a new facility will bring jobs initially, particularly in the construction phase, experience suggests an ultimate net loss in jobs. Expanded gambling did not bring the promised economic development to Mississippi, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota or Wisconsin. Why would Massachusetts be any different?

In Connecticut, with the world's two largest casinos, the state Legislature, with the Governor's support, voted a few months back to repeal its Las Vegas Night Law in an attempt to keep more casinos from being built within its borders. The business community also opposed additional casinos because legalized slot machines and casinos had hurt small businesses. A hundred dollars spent in a slot machine is a hundred dollars that is not spent in a local restaurant, theater or retail store.

The problem of containing, moderating, and fixing the limits of gambling gets worse once Class III gambling (slot machines) is legalized. Under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, if Class III gambling is legalized in Massachusetts, any recognized Native American Tribe can also engage in the same level of gambling. Although currently Massachusetts has only one recognized Native American tribe, six more await federal recognition.

Last but not least, the social problems associated with casinos should not be overlooked. While most people who frequent casinos do so responsibly, a significant number become compulsive gamblers. Gambling triggers addiction and this addiction has become an epidemic, especially among younger people. Gambling also attracts crime, victimizes the poor and presents a poor example to our children. Legalizing slots and casinos will also amplify family instability, including violence in the home and bankruptcy. Additionally, casinos will attract drugs and prostitution. Addressing these problems will cost the state money.

The issue of casino gambling is sure to come up this fall in the state Senate. I urge you to let your state senator know that you oppose legalizing casino and slot machine gambling and ask them to oppose it as well. Elected officials can represent their constituents best only if they know where their constituents stand on the issues. Voice your opinion. Make your voice count!

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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts is a statewide, grassroots, nonpartisan, political organization. Membership in the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (\$45 per year; not tax deductible) includes subscriptions to the state and national Voters. Individual subscriptions to the Massachusetts Voter, which is published six times a year, are \$12.50 per year.

Diversity Policy of LWVM

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts is committed to reflect, in its principles and practices, the diversity and pluralism in our state. In both its principles and practices, the League of Women Voters will promote inclusion: there shall be no barrier based on race, ethnicity, national origin, creed, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or age in leadership, staffing, membership, or participation in any League-sponsored activity. The League acknowledges that pluralism and diverse perspectives are necessary for responsible and representative decision making, as well as fundamental to the values the League upholds.

HAVA Q&A

By Carol Reimers
LWVM Vice-President, Citizen
Education/Voters Service

Some questions that may help clarify the impact of the "Help America Vote Act"

What is HAVA?

On October 29, 2002 President Bush signed the "Help America Vote Act" (HAVA). This major piece of legislation authorizes funds for each state to improve the operation of elections. It also requires states to make many changes, but gives them much leeway in how they comply. Depending on how each state implements HAVA requirements, access to voting may become more restrictive rather than less.

How will HAVA affect me when I go to vote?

You may encounter new voting machines if the machines in your voting district were outdated.

Voting information must be posted at every polling place on election day, including: a) a sample of the ballot used for that election, b) instructions on how to vote, including how to cast a vote and how to cast a provisional ballot, c) instructions for mail-in registrants and first-time voters, d) gen-

eral information on voting rights under applicable federal and state laws, including information on the right of an individual to cast a provisional ballot, e) instructions on how to contact the appropriate officials if these rights have been violated, and f) general information on federal and state laws prohibiting fraud and misrepresentation.

What happens if I make a mistake while voting?

All voting systems must provide for "second chance" voting. The system must allow the voter to privately and independently a) verify her votes on the ballot, b) provide the opportunity to correct any error (through issuance of a replacement ballot if necessary), and c) be notified and have the opportunity to correct an "overvote" (casting too many votes for a particular office, usually more than one vote).

HAVA insures the right to replace a spoiled ballot, the right to vote of anyone standing in line when the polls close, the right to ask for and receive assistance from polling place officials.

How does HAVA affect voters with disabilities?

Each polling place must have "at least one direct recording electronic voting system or other voting system equipped for individuals with disabilities." The voting system must "be accessible for individuals with disabilities, including non-visual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same

opportunity for access and participation (including privacy and independence) as for other voters."

Does HAVA change voter registration?

If you are registering to vote, you will face the following requirements:

A state may not accept or process any voter registration application unless it includes: 1) the applicant's driver's license number or, if the registrant doesn't have a current and valid driver's license, 2) the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security Number. For voters who do not have either of the above numbers, the state must assign a unique number to identify the voter for registration purposes. It is up to the state to determine "whether the information provided by an individual is sufficient to meet the requirements ... in accordance with State law."

The chief state election official and the state motor vehicle authority must enter into an agreement to match information in their databases "to verify the accuracy of the information provided on applications for voter registration." In addition, the motor vehicle authority must enter into an agreement with the U.S. Social Security Commissioner "for the purpose of verifying applicable information."

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Massachusetts League of Women Voters Fall Conference

Fall Conference workshops to cover timely policy issues

By Lynn Cohen

LWVM EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

Participants in the five concurrent workshops being offered at LWVM's Fall Conference on October 25 will be able to interact with and learn from experts on several high-profile public policy issues. The workshops run from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. and are free and open to the public.

Equitable Delivery of Health Care Services features Jackie Jenkins-Scott, president and chief executive officer of the Dimock Community Health Center in Roxbury. Under Ms. Jenkins-Scott's leadership, Dimock is considered a national model of integrated comprehensive health and human services. Ms. Jenkins-Scott will participate in a discussion of health care delivery in Massachusetts.

What People Need to Know about Pending Health Care Legislation features State Senator

Steven Tolman, cosponsor of the Massachusetts Health Care Trust Bill. Sen. Tolman, who represents the second Suffolk and Middlesex district, is chairperson of the Joint Committee on Counties, vice-chairperson of the Joint Committee on Public Service and a member of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, among others. Sen. Tolman will provide updates and answers to questions on upcoming health care legislation at the State House.

A Healthy Life Begins with a Healthy Environment brings together a panel of experts – Brent Baeslack, Merrimack Valley Environmental Coalition; Suzanne Sullivan, Wilmington Selectman and long-time environmental advocate; a representative of Healthlinks of Salem; and moderator Meleah Houseknecht – who will share their experiences and advice concerning their efforts to identify, publicize and work to alleviate local environmental problems. Ms. Houseknecht will also discuss what support an umbrella organization can provide to local activists.

The PATRIOT Act & Individual Liberties features Carol Rose, executive director of the ACLU of Massachusetts, who will help participants examine the key provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act, the proposed PATRIOT Act II, and other executive branch actions that affect civil liberties.

Real Choice, New Voices: Other Voting Systems will be led by Douglas J. Amy, professor of politics at Mt. Holyoke College and author of *Behind the Ballot Box: A Citizens Guide to Voting Systems*. Workshop participants will discuss how to approach the study of alternative voting systems and will review some of the basic information needed to begin such a study. The workshop will also describe various kinds of voting systems, including plurality, instant runoff, proportional and semi-proportional systems, and will begin to discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of these systems.

Fall Conference Focuses on Health & Liberty

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The panel discussion that follows the keynote address is designed to encourage dynamic dialogue among our distinguished panelists. Experts in their fields, our panelists will discuss health care from varied perspectives. There will be ample opportunity for the audience to ask questions. The eminent panel includes:

Marcia Angell, MD, Senior Lecturer, Harvard Medical School, Department of Social Medicine

Michael Dukakis, Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Northeastern University and former Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Christine Ferguson, Commissioner of Public Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and

Dr. Alan Sager, Director, Health Reform Program, Boston University School of Public Health.

WBZ-TV news anchor **Lisa Hughes** will moderate the discussion.

Our featured speaker at lunch will be **Carol Rose**, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts. She will address us on "Individual Liberties and the USA Patriot Act: Meeting Our Obligation to History." Basic civil liberties must be preserved and protected as the nation seeks to guard against terrorism and other threats to national security. How can Congress, the President and all citizens of the United States vigilantly work to preserve the greatest degree of civil liberty in the fight against terrorism?

The five concurrent workshops planned for the afternoon include "A Healthy Life Begins with a Healthy Environment," "Equitable Delivery of Health Care Services," "What People Need to Know About Pending Health Care Legislation," "The Patriot Act, Individual Liberties," and "Voting Systems." The workshops will run from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Fall Conference is free and open to the public. Advance registration is not needed for any of the workshops or panel discussion. Lunch is available for \$20; the deadline for luncheon reservation is Friday, October 10. A Lunch Reservation Form is available in this *Voter*.

Fixing Our Broken Health Care System: Incremental or Comprehensive Change?

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many recommendations which have not been implemented; Ballot Question #5 in the 2000 elections which would have established universal coverage for all residents of Massachusetts, but which failed by a narrow percentage of votes; efforts to pass a "single-payer" bill in the legislature modeled on the Canadian system; plus several minor reforms which have been passed by the legislature.

The LWVM Health Care Committee has been monitoring and evaluating these initiatives over the last eight years and has been involved in advocacy activities on some of them based on the LWVUS Health Care Position. That position, which was published in April 1993 following a two-year study of the health care service delivery and financing system, stated that the United States should provide "a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost that should be available to all U.S. residents."

One of the major issues in this debate at both the federal and state levels centers on the need for comprehensive change versus incremental change in the system.

The conference's distinguished speakers will present various points of view. Keynote speaker Representative John Tierney has authored a bill proposing federal funding for several states to allow them to establish pilot programs utilizing different approaches to the problem. Representative Tierney is very knowledgeable about the problems in the current health care system and believes that the states, which have often been referred to as "the laboratories of democracy," are in a good position to design, implement and evaluate various types of universal coverage for their residents.

John F. Tierney is serving his fourth term in Congress representing the Massachusetts Northshore's Sixth Congressional District. He is a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness and the Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations. He is also a member of the House Committee on Governmental Reform. Representative Tierney's legislative priorities include strengthening America's public schools;



Rep. John F. Tierney, Massachusetts Sixth District

providing access to high quality health care for all Americans, including a Medicare prescription drug benefit for seniors; addressing the workforce development issues of literacy, job-training and life-long learning and providing greater retirement security.

Four panelists will present their diverse views on how the health care system can be "fixed." **Marcia Angell, MD**, is senior lecturer in the Department of Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School. She stepped down as Editor-in-Chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine* in June 2000. Having joined the NEJM editorial staff in 1979, she became Executive Editor in 1988 and Editor-in-Chief in 1999. Dr. Angell writes frequently in professional journals and the popular media on a wide range of topics, particularly medical ethics, health policy, the nature of medical evidence, the interface of medicine and the law, and care at the end of life. In 1997, *Time* magazine named Dr. Angell one of the 25 most influential Americans.

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Fall Conference: Carol Rose, featured luncheon speaker

By Madhu Sridhar
LWVM PRESIDENT

Carol Rose, executive director of the ACLU of Massachusetts, is the featured luncheon speaker at Fall Conference. A lawyer and journalist, she has spent her career working for human rights and civil liberties, both in the United States and abroad.

Individual Liberties and the USA Patriot Act: Meeting Our Obligation to History is the topic of Ms. Rose's speech. In the wake of the horrific events of September 11, 2001, Congress quickly passed the Patriot Act, giving the federal government expanded powers to fight terrorism. Some of these powers, however, run counter to constitutionally guaranteed freedoms. Proposals for a new Domestic Security Enhancement Act, also known as Patriot Act II, and the possible extension of the sunset provisions and the impact of the Patriot Act itself, are of growing concern to the public and the League. Civil liberties are the cornerstone of American values. We must protect our homeland through means that protect our civil liberties, rather than chipping away at the basic values for which America stands.

Prior to taking the helm of the Massachusetts ACLU last January, Ms. Rose was an attorney at the Boston law firm of Hill & Barlow, where she specialized in First Amendment and Internet Law, domestic civil rights and international human rights law. As a journalist, Carol worked for United Press International, the Des Moines Register, and The New York Times, and has published extensively.

Fixing Our Broken Health Care System

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Michael S. Dukakis is a distinguished professor of political science at Northeastern University and has taught in the senior executive program for State and Local managers at the John F. Kennedy School



Carol Rose, Executive Director, Mass. ACLU

of Government at Harvard University and at the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research. His research has focused on national health care policy reform and the lessons that national policy makers can learn from state reform efforts. Dukakis was elected Massachusetts governor in 1974. Defeated in the Democratic primary in 1978, he won back the governorship in 1982 and was re-elected to a third four-year term in 1986. In 1988 Dukakis won the Democratic nomination for the presidency but was defeated by George Bush.

Christine C. Ferguson has been commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health since January 2003. Prior to this appointment, Commissioner Ferguson was director of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services for seven years. During her tenure in Rhode Island, she restructured the state's Medicaid managed care system and brought health insurance coverage to more than 100,000 residents of the state who were offered the opportunity to purchase insurance from private carriers through a statewide purchasing group. For 13 years prior to serving in Rhode Island, Commissioner Ferguson held posts as counsel and deputy chief of staff to the late U.S. Senator John H. Chafee. In 1994, she served as the principle architect of the Mainstream Coalition's bipartisan alternative to the Clinton Health Care Reform bill.

Alan Sager, MD, is a professor at the Boston University School of Public Health, School of Medicine, where he has taught since 1983. His courses on health care finance, planning, and administration have won five awards. Dr. Sager is investigating ways to: assure that all Americans can affordably obtain needed prescription drugs; identify and stabilize needed hospitals and other caregivers; and shape health care competition we can trust with our lives. Dr. Sager is one of two principals in the Access and Affordability Monitoring Project, established in 1988 to analyze the causes of health care access and cost problems in Massachusetts, and to design better ways to finance and deliver care.

The panel discussion will be moderated by Emmy Award-winning journalist **Lisa Hughes**. Hughes is a news anchor for WBZ-TV 4 News. Prior to joining WBZ-TV Hughes traveled the world for CBS Newspath, the CBS-TV Station Group's satellite news service, reporting stories for WBZ including extensive coverage of Washington, DC and Capitol Hill.

HAVA Q&A

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What happens if I register by mail?

HAVA requires that the federal mail-in registration form include check-off boxes for citizenship and being 18 years of age by Election Day.

A citizen who registers by mail and has not previously voted in an election in the state, must present: 1) a current and valid photo identification; or 2) a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter. Voters who do not present ID must be permitted to cast a provisional ballot (but whether the vote will count is determined by the provisional ballot system). (If a first-time voter casts her vote by mail, she must submit a copy of one of the documents with the ballot.)

What will happen if my name is not on the voter list but I know I have registered?

If you arrive at the polling place and find that your name is not on the voter list, the state must provide a provisional ballot to any person who declares they are: a) registered to vote and b) eligible to vote in a federal election. Even if the voter is

not on the voter list or her eligibility is challenged, she must be offered a provisional ballot.

If I am given a provisional ballot will my vote be counted?

The state must have a system to determine whether to count each provisional ballot cast. While the precise details are not set out, the decision to count or not count an individual ballot must be made "in accordance with State law." A well-run system should provide for counting a vote if the voter is eligible to vote for a particular office; for example, a voter should have his vote counted for a U.S. Senate race even if he is not eligible to vote for a local office because he is not a resident of a particular ward or district. Also, the system must set up uniform procedures by which an official "determines that the individual is eligible under State law to vote."

Election officials must establish a system to notify a voter who casts a provisional ballot whether it was counted, and if not, why not. At a minimum, there must be "a free access system (such as a toll-free telephone number or an Internet website) that any individual who casts a provisional ballot may access to discover whether the vote was counted, and, if the vote was not counted, the

reason that the vote was not counted. At the polling place, the voter must be given written instructions on how to obtain that information. A system for providing, verifying and counting provisional ballots must be uniform throughout the state and within each polling place.

There are many other aspects of this law. If you have any other questions, please submit them to the League office, (617) 523-2999 or lwvma@lwvma.org.

Planning to shop at Amazon.com?

Don't forget to go to the LWVM

homepage, www.lwvma.org, & click on the

Amazon.com link.

The League will receive a percentage

of your purchase

amazon.com

Lotte E. Scharfman and River Steward Awards News

Four area Leagues honored with Lotte E. Scharfman awards

By Pat Facey

MEMBER CITIZEN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Awards honor the memory of Lotte Scharfman who was president of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts at the time of her death in 1970. As a child she escaped from Austria to the United States. The experience gave her such a deep appreciation and love of the democratic process she wanted every citizen to have access to government at all levels.

Annual awards, from the fund established in her name, recognize local Leagues whose activities help fulfill her dream by providing outstanding and creative voter service programs to the people in their communities.

The 2003 awards of free registration for Convention 2005 were presented at state convention to four Leagues: Sudbury, Acton Area and Westford who shared a first prize, and Falmouth. These Leagues were honored for creative voter service/citizen education programs that responded to unique needs in their communities. All provided the basic voter service programs: registration, get-out-the vote efforts, candidate/issue forums, and working at the polls. Highlights are listed here, the Citizen Education Committee will send a complete list of the winners' activities to voter service directors in the fall.

Sudbury's 43 members held "salons" on hot topics: Afghanistan-Taliban, Loss of Civil Rights after 9/11, and Global Economics. They produced a quick reference card for town meeting members and updated the town permitting process booklet


available on their website. They initiated programs about teen dating and domestic violence in their high school. They prepared a recreation needs study, which they presented to town officials. In December, they sponsored a family from a battered women's shelter.

Westford's website includes election information, a town traffic forum report, a how-to-run-for office section, as well as links to local, state and national elected officials. The 88 member group planned and ran a student/parent mock election for 1,200 students in grades 3-8. They prepare a guide to town meeting, air a cable program on the town warrant before town meeting and work with the town manager to prepare a warrant in "plain English" sent with summaries to all town residents.


The 99 member Acton Area League held public forums on school budgets, the Acton Public Safety Building, November ballot questions, domestic violence issues and the budget. They did a study of town meeting working with the Acton Moderator to improve the quality of town meeting. They held a "Simulated Town Meeting" prior to a \$3 million override vote, inviting proponents, opponents and students to speak. Two 6th grade students took advantage of the opportunity.

Falmouth, with 132 members, concentrated zealously on getting voters to the polls: creating posters, op-ed pieces complete with a member's cartoon, "My Dog Ate My Absentee Ballot," and a popular newspaper photo series with seven well-known residents holding signs, "Democracy – the More You Use It the Better It Works." Their meetings and forums that included events like a tour of the local landfill, visits to Boston recycling center and affordable housing in Falmouth are broadcast on public access community television.

In a time of voter apathy and political disaffection, the League of Women Voters is vital to the democratic tradition. Local Leagues across the state and nation, not just these winners, strive to bring people into the process. Every member is needed.



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TO INDICATE YOUR INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING.**

Four Leagues join to create River Awards program

By Debbie Barr

PAST PRESIDENT, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF
CONCORD-CARLISLE

The Concord-Carlisle, Lincoln, Sudbury and Wayland Leagues launched a River Steward and Conservation Awards program with the Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council. The Awards honor unsung heroes within the river communities who are doing their part to protect the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Rivers. This successful program brought area Leagues together to highlight conservation efforts and issues in our towns. The Awards reception was hosted by Minute Man National Historic Park on June 6, and included 150 guests from all nine river communities. Congressman Chet Atkins, whose legislative leadership resulted in the Wild and Scenic River designation in 1999, presented nine awards to individuals and organizations. Finalists were chosen based on the 'historic, literary, scenic, recreational and ecological' values for which the rivers were nationally designated 'wild and scenic.'

The impact and visibility of an awards process is a natural for Leagues. It follows League policy on the preservation of natural resources and highlights past and current conservation leaders. It gives our members the opportunity for a hands-on

approach in implementing League policy in partnership with environmental preservation organizations. Moreover, the six-month application process affords an opportunity for networking and community outreach.

The Planning Committee included LWVCC members Debbie Barr and Betsy Sluder, League Presidents of Concord-Carlisle (Nancy Beeuwkes), Lincoln (Susan Harding and Jennie Greeson), Sudbury (Marilyn Ellsworth) and Wayland (Iryna Priester), plus Lee Steppacher, River Stewardship Council and Melissa Saalfeld, Minute Man National Historic Park. Each League handled publicity including announcing the Awards program to news media, follow-up letters, and calls to town committees, boards and relevant organizations.

A prestigious Selection Committee reviewed all applications and met to select finalists. They were Laura Johnson, President of Massachusetts Audubon Society; Martha Stevenson, MA League Water Resources Chair, and Mary Jane Morrin, MA League Natural Resources Chair; and two River

Stewardship Council representatives Julia Blatt, Director of OAR, and Ron McAdow, Director, Sudbury Valley Trustees.

Response to the awards was positive. A second round in 2004 will reflect what we learned this first year. For more information, call Nancy Beeuwkes, LWVCC Co-President.



River Awards Reception, left to right: Marilyn Ellsworth (Sudbury), Amy Galblum (Sudbury), Jennie Greeson (Lincoln), Debbie Barr (Concord-Carlisle), and Nancy Beeuwkes (Concord-Carlisle). [Missing: Susan Harding (Lincoln), Iryna Priester (Wayland), and Betsy Sluder (Concord-Carlisle)]

The League Speaks Out on the Legislative Pay Raise Bill

By Beth Lowd

LWVM CAMPAIGN REFORM SPECIALIST

Governor Romney vetoed H.3743, a bill passed by the Massachusetts House and Senate that would have given the Speaker or Senate President unprecedented power to grant stipends to Committee Chairs and other leaders within his Chamber. The bill would also have doubled existing stipends for committee Chairs. The Massachusetts constitution requires that such pay changes be passed by BOTH houses and approved by the Governor, just as any legislation would be, thus providing a check on the decision-making.

This July, the League joined other concerned organizations, including Common Cause, CPPAX, and Citizens for Limited Taxation, in opposing House Speaker Thomas Finneran's effort to override the Governor's veto. The League sent out an action alert to members, letters to the editor, letters to legislators, and a press release. Hundreds of League members reportedly contacted their legislators about the issue.

The League's objection was the undermining of the checks and balances in the Massachusetts constitution, which would have allowed one person too much power to set salary levels without oversight.

"The Massachusetts Constitution requires that legislative pay be voted on by the General Court and approved by the Governor. This bill will undermine an important principle of democratic government," said Madhu Sridhar, President of the League. "Any attempt to change that process is dangerous and foolhardy."

Several days later the Speaker admitted defeat, after a firestorm of protest in the media. Once the stipend changes were removed from the bill, the less controversial aspects of the legislation to reorganize the House were passed unanimously. The House voted to eliminate the Committee on County Government and the Committee on Federal Financial Assistance, and established two new committees, a Committee on Homeland Security and a Committee on Medicaid.

Clean Elections Law Repealed

By Beth Lowd

LWVM CAMPAIGN REFORM SPECIALIST

On Thursday, May 29, 2003, on an unrecorded voice "vote" the Massachusetts Senate passed an amendment to their budget repealing the Clean Elections Law.

The law had been enacted in 1998 by 1.1 million voters, with two thirds of the voters in favor of the initiative petition. During the 2002 election cycle, the legislature resisted funding the law, discouraging most eligible candidates from using the public funding by their delay. After the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that legislators were in "blatant and flagrant violation" of their constitutional obligation to fund the law and after the Court allowed supporters to auction off state property to provide the necessary funding, the legislature finally appropriated a small amount for the few remaining Clean Elections candidates' campaigns.

The League of Women Voters had strongly opposed repeal, and it deplored the lack of debate and the unrecorded vote by the Senate. We wrote to Governor Romney urging him to veto the repeal, but the Governor chose not to veto, citing the voters' rejection of Question 3 on last year's ballot.

Question 3 did not mention the Clean Elections Law, nor did it specify that the law limits fund raising and spending by candidates. Instead it asked whether voters approved of using taxpayer's money to fund political campaigns. A more complete question passed in the 11 districts where it appeared on the ballot.

The League of Women Voters had endeavored to persuade the Committee on Election Laws to modify the Clean Elections Law rather than repeal it. The League had urged consideration of several bills that would have funded the law through non-tax means, allowed for legislators to use money for office expenses, and tightened requirements for qualifying for money.

In the coming months, the League will participate with other citizens' groups in drafting a new bill to limit campaign fundraising and spending and to provide public funding for candidates who qualify. We expect the Governor and the Committee on Election Laws to make their own proposals. One resource will be a report by the Center for Governmental Studies called "Where to Get the Money? New Sources of Public Financing for Political Campaigns" which can be obtained at www.cgs.org.

The LWVUS position on campaign finance states a goal to "improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for office, and promote citizen participation in the political process."

Clean Elections Laws are working in Maine and Arizona to attract more people to run for office and to increase citizens' confidence in government. Interested readers may wish to read the May 2003 GAO report on the early experiences in these states. (GAO-03-453)

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Thank you for supporting the League of Women Voters with your membership or donation!

Award-Winning Local Leagues Shape the Future

By Erin Pastuszewski

LWVM VICE-PRESIDENT, MEMBERSHIP & TRAINING

Eleven local Leagues received awards at Convention 2003 for outstanding membership growth last year. Eight of those Leagues had successfully participated in the Shaping the Future incentive program. They achieved a net growth in local membership equal to at least 5% of their January 2002 total, and they engaged in new or expanded activities in at least four areas, such as Coalition Building, Citizen Education and Communications.

The award-winners took the Shaping the Future tools provided by LWVM and used them skillfully. Leagues became more visible and effective in their communities by joining coalitions, educating new voters, reaching out by cable TV and the internet and advocating on issues important in their cities and towns. They found that a high profile and a strong reputation for accuracy and effectiveness pay off, drawing support of many kinds, from new members to fundraising success.

The following Leagues received a certificate of recognition and earned a one-year state assessment credit for their net new local membership: Bedford (12 new local members), Boston (7), Hingham (4), Milton (7), Needham (9), Plymouth Area (14), Westford (12) and Westwood (15). Credits totaling \$1,500 rewarded the winners' successful efforts.

In addition, three Leagues that did not participate in Shaping the Future nevertheless grew by at

least 10% in total membership during 2002. At Convention, the Leagues of Sharon/Stoughton (12% growth), Williamstown (17%) and Winchester (15%) each received a certificate recognizing their noteworthy accomplishment.

The Massachusetts League congratulates each of these Leagues and their hard-working membership chairs, presidents, and boards for a job well done. Shaping the Future award recipients for 2003 will be honored at LWVM's Council 2004 next May. Contact Erin Pastuszewski, LWVM Membership and Training VP, for more information.

Joint Health Care Committee Meeting

By Barbara Sullivan

MEMBER, LWVM HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE

LWVM members are urged to attend a hearing of the legislature's Joint Health Care Committee on October 8 to hear testimony on the Massachusetts Health Care Trust bill (S.686), which LWVM supports. The hearing will be held at the State House in Gardner Auditorium at 10:00 a.m.

Following the hearing, members will be encouraged to lobby their legislators to support the bill which would provide health care to all Massachusetts residents under a single-payer system.

Attending this hearing would provide members an opportunity to hear more about the bill and help to ensure its approval by the Joint Health Care Committee so that it can be voted on in the full Senate.

For more details, please contact the LWVM office.

Spotlight on local Leagues

By Lora Goldenberg

LWVM BULLETIN AND MINUTES READER

Local Leagues around the state have completed their Annual Meetings and are beginning to organize their many innovative activities and events for the 2003-2004 year.

The **Topsfield/Boxford/Middleton** League Annual Meeting heard from Selma Williams, a former editor of a local newspaper, about her work teaching good journalism in Central Asia. The **Concord/Carlisle** League Annual Meeting hosted speakers from the Walden Woods conservation group and the editors of the two communities' newspapers. The **Bedford** League heard a presentation on the Domestic Violence Victims Assistance Program from the Bedford Police Chief, Program Co-Director, and member of the volunteer board. The project assists police officers in Acton, Bedford, Carlisle, Concord, Lincoln, Maynard, and Stow and follows up incidents with offers of services to victims.

Some Leagues ended the year with action. The **Newton** League made a statement to the Board of Alderman opposing certain provisions of the Patriot Act. The **Waltham** League wrote to the Mayor and City Councilors expressing concern about the re-use plans for the Fernald School property, a former Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation facility. The League recommended a citizen's information hearing. The **Melrose** League wrote a letter and testified to the Board of Alderman in support of making Melrose government more accessible to the public.

Local Leagues are planning a variety of fundraising activities in the new year. The **Hingham** League has an annual flower sale. Both the **Marion/Mattapoi-sett/Rochester** and **Hamilton-Wenham** Leagues publish a telephone book. The **Cape Ann** and **Falmouth** Leagues are holding major yard sales. The **Cape Ann** League also publishes a cookbook and sponsors a craft fair. The **Amherst** League will continue to hold its enormous book sale and a finance drive. The

Acton Area League will solicit local businesses for bulletin advertisements or donations.

Both the **Belmont** and **Hamilton-Wenham** Leagues are planning local studies on senior needs in their communities.

The **Newton** League is planning a workshop on running for office. The **Framingham** League's goals for 2003-2004 are educating local residents and encouraging them to vote.

The **Waltham** League is putting together a box of items that they can take to any public gathering to publicize the League.

The **Walpole/Westwood** League has published a list of books covering civic and political issues with the aim of initiating a "LWV book club." They will also kick off the year with speaker Dr. Marion Just, a professor of political science at Wellesley College. Dr. Just works in the areas of mass media, public opinion, and elections, and her current projects include electoral reform, voting, campaigning and political uses of the Internet.

Picking a winner

By Marjorie Daggett

MEMBER, VOTING SYSTEMS STUDY COMMITTEE

This is the first in a series of Voter articles presenting background information for the LWVM study of voting systems.

The Editor

A voting system itself can determine 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 the range of candidates and choices available to all voters.

Winner Take All

The most common voting system is "winner-take-all" (or single member district plurality system) where the candidate with the most votes wins whether his or her vote is a majority or not. For example, if in a four candidate race the final count is: Tom 30 percent, Dick 38 percent, Harry 17 percent, and Joe 15 percent, then Dick wins with much less than a majority of the votes. This system has the advantages of being easy to administer and allowing the voter to cast a ballot for an individual not a party. It also reinforces the two-party system.

The disadvantages of plurality voting are: 1) It may violate a basic tenet of democracy: majority rule. For example, in several Massachusetts Democratic primaries for Congressman (where winning the primary is tantamount to election), winner among numerous candidates sometimes received less than 30% of the vote. 2) "Sincere" votes (votes for candidates not of the two major parties) are discouraged. 3) A "spoiler" candidate may change the dynamics of a race. 4) Some critics think this system encourages negative campaigning.

Runoff Election

To increase the likelihood of achieving the will of the majority, some southern states, as well as countries like France and Australia, use a runoff election. If no candidate wins a majority in the first vote, then the top two vote-getters face off in a second election. Some advantages of this system are its ease of understanding and administration, elimination of spoilers, encouragement of inter-party cooperation before the second round, and reduction of negative campaigning.

The disadvantages of a runoff election are the expense of a second election, even lower turnout in the second and decisive election, and the possibility of eliminating a potential

winner if the second and third vote getters in round one were very close.

Instant Runoff

This system was designed to overcome the main objections to the above two systems: winning with only a plurality and having to mount two elections. In an instant runoff election, the voter ranks each candidate, e.g. Tom - 2, Dick - 1, Harry - 3, and Joe - 4. After all the votes are counted and no candidate has a majority, the second choices on the ballots for the candidate with the lowest vote total are added to the first choice votes received by the other three, etc. until one candidate receives over 50 percent of the vote. This system ensures a majority winner. More sincere votes are cast, and spoilers are eliminated. This system is cheaper than a runoff election. Negative campaigning is reduced since all candidates want those second choice votes from all other candidates.

Unfamiliarity and possible confusion could be disadvantages of this system. There is an initial administrative complexity and expense since many districts would need new voting equipment or new software. The few districts with paper ballots would need training in counting the votes in this system.

LWVM Launches New Website

By Joanna Corrado Daniel

LWVM VICE-PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

If you haven't visited the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts website, www.lwvma.org, lately, you in for a pleasant surprise. In mid August, we launched our new website, which was designed and implemented by Beth Peterson.

Beth is an active member of the Westford LWV and her work has included publishing the Westford League Bulletin. Professionally, she is experienced in technical project management and marketing. Beth is currently doing website devel-

opment and is most interested in working for non-profits, especially those involved in politics and government. Beth said, "I loved working for the LWV and I hope the website continues to develop as a central, active communication and marketing tool for the League." We were very lucky to have her take on our website redesign.

The new site has been designed to be easy to use and pleasant to look at. There is a wealth of resident information and links to many more Internet locations, allowing visitors to learn about how the LWVM works, what we do and how to get involved.

The new website, at www.lwvma.org, is better viewed than described, so we encourage you to go there often and take advantage of what it has to offer.



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2003 FALL CONFERENCE

Fixing Our Broken Health Care System: Incremental or Comprehensive Change?

Saturday, October 25, 2003, Renaissance Bedford Hotel

44 Middlesex Turnpike, Bedford, MA 01730, 781-275-5500

★ 9:30 a.m. KEYNOTE SPEAKER ★ Congressman John F. Tierney

★ 10:00 a.m. Panelists ★

Marcia Angell, MD

Senior Lecturer, Harvard Medical School Department of Social Medicine

Michael S. Dukakis

Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Northeastern University

Christine F. Ferguson

Commissioner of Public Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Dr. Alan Sager

Director, Health Reform Program, Boston University School of Public Health

Moderated by **Lisa Hughes**, WBZ-TV 4 news anchor

★ 12 NOON – LUNCH ★

Featured luncheon speaker: **Carol Rose, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts**
Individual Liberties & the USA Patriot Act: Our Obligation to History

★ 1:30 3:30 p.m. WORKSHOPS ★

Equitable Delivery of Health Care Services

Jackie Jenkins-Scott

A Healthy Life Begins with a Healthy Environment

Brent Baeslack, Suzanne Sullivan, & Meleah Houseknecht

The USA PATRIOT Act and Individual Liberties

Carol Rose

What People Need to Know About Pending Health Care Legislation

Senator Steven Tolman

Real Choice, New Voices: Other Voting Systems

Prof. Douglas J. Amy

There is no charge for the conference or workshops and advance registration is only necessary for lunch. Lunch is \$20.00. Advance registration is required by October 10, 2003.

Directions to Renaissance Bedford Hotel
44 Middlesex Turnpike, Bedford, MA

2003 FALL CONFERENCE LUNCH RESERVATION *Please Return by Friday, October 10th*

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Local League (if applicable) _____

Number of Luncheon Tickets _____ X \$20.00 Amount Enclosed _____

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Expiration date (mo/yr) _____

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Or call the LWVM office at 617-523-2999 to order your lunch tickets by credit card

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North towards Middlesex TPKE, bear right on Middlesex TPKE

FROM THE SOUTH

93 North, Exit 37B RT-128/95 South,
Exit 32B-A/US-3 North towards
Middlesex TPKE, bear right on
Middlesex TPKE

FROM THE WES

495 North, Exit US-3 towards
Burlington, Merge on US-3 South, Exit
#26 RT 62 towards Bedford-Burlington.
Turn left on Burlington Rd, continue on
Bedford Street, turn left on Middlesex
TPKE