



THE MASSACHUSETTS VOTER

October 2004

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

Volume 80, Number 4

Fall Conference Focuses on Voters' Power to Affect the Future

Robin L. Rich

LWVM Assistant Executive Director

National security and civil liberties. The economy and the federal budget. Education and health care. All of these public policy issues, as well as many others, play a major role in elections and profoundly affect our lives. With the 2004 Presidential election looming large, the League's **Fall Conference on Saturday, October 30**, will address these very timely issues. **Dolores L. Mitchell**, Vice President of Political Planning of the National Women's Political Caucus, and Middlesex County District Attorney **Martha Coakley** are the Conference's featured speakers.

The Conference, "**Our Choices, Our Future – Vote 2004**," will emphasize not only the importance of voting, but also the need to understand how our votes tangibly and practically affect our lives. When we vote for a particular candidate, we are voting for our own choices and our own futures – and the futures of our families, our community and our country. The League's central mission is to encourage the active participation of citizens in government. To fully participate in our government, Americans must appreciate how voting affects our lives and the lives of others.

This fall the candidates, the media and voters will be discussing the issues at stake in November's election. The LWVM Fall Conference will address these issues from a nonpartisan point of view by featuring a number of renowned experts.

With her wide-ranging political, health care and governmental experience, keynote speaker **Dolores L. Mitchell** will bring her unique insights to how our choices in Election 2004 will influence our own and the country's future.

Currently Vice President of Political Planning of the National



Dolores L. Mitchell, Vice President of Political Planning of the National Women's Caucus

Women's Political Caucus, Ms. Mitchell is also one of the founding members of the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus and continues to serve on its board of directors. Both organizations are multipartisan (*Fall Conference cont. on page 5*)

The Final Stretch: Vote! 2004 Campaign The Top Five Risks to Voters in Election 2004

By Risa Nyman

LWVM Executive Director

The course of the election in 2000 shocked many Americans. They were stunned by the confusion, the suspicions, and the process used to resolve the uncertainties. The national call to fix these problems resulted in the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA).

As the League prepares for Election 2004, we must make certain that HAVA accomplishes its goals and its promise. The League of Women Voters of the United States, in conjunction with the Leadership Conference

on Civil Rights, has identified the top five risks to eligible voters. Here in Massachusetts, the League has embarked on a far-reaching *Vote! 2004 Campaign* to combat any potential risks to voters' rights in Massachusetts.

The top five risks to eligible voters are unsuccessful voter registration; erroneous purging; problems with the new ID requirement; difficulties with voting systems, and failure to count provisional ballots.

1. Voter registration: In 2000 some people found that their names were not on the voters' list. The reasons for the omissions were varied: some voters were missed because they registered through an agency and their forms were not forwarded to be acted on; at some polling places the voters' list was incomplete; many voters went to the wrong polling place. Because voter registration is the first step in the voting process, it must be accessible, without obstacles, and easily done.

(*Final Stretch cont. on page 7*)

The Massachusetts General Court Resolutions recognizes League's Voters Bill of Rights



Senator Brian Joyce, Chair Election Laws Committee presents *The Massachusetts General Court Resolutions recognizing the League's Massachusetts Voters Bill of Rights* to Madhu Sridhar, President of the League of Women Voters.

LWVM Fall Conference
Saturday, October 30
 Quincy Marriott Hotel
 1000 Marriott Drive, Quincy – 617-472-1000

Our Choices, Our Future
VOTE! 2004

<p style="text-align: center;">Keynote Speaker Dolores L. Mitchell Vice President, Political Planning National Women's Political Caucus Founding member, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Luncheon Speaker Martha Coakley District Attorney Middlesex County Massachusetts</p>
--	---

Registration – 9:00 a.m.
Keynote – 9:30 a.m.
Panel Discussion Our Choices, Our Future – 10:15 a.m.

Panelists

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Health Care</i> Judith Kurland former Regional Director for the Department of Health and Human Services</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Security</i> Harvey Sapolsky Director, Security Studies Program at MIT</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Education</i> Paul Reville Executive Director, Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, MassINC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Economy</i> John Walgreen Director of the Public Policy Program, Wheaton College</p>

Lunch – 12 noon
Workshops – 1:30-3:30 p.m.
Voters Service Tools – Make Them Work for You!
Justice in Massachusetts?
Campaign Finance Reform – What is the Way
Solving the Healthcare Crisis?
No Better Time to Ask – League Membership in an Election Year

Advance registration required. Registration form & directions on page 8.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

LWVM Program in Action	page 3
Spotlight on Local Leagues	page 4
Voting System Study	page 6
HAVA – Safeguard the Vote	page 7



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Madhu Sridhar
LWVM President

Democracy's Challenge

More than 200 years ago when George Washington was first elected president of the United States, fewer than 25% of the adult population had the right to vote. Three-quarters of the people who were to build our country were excluded from this simple act of self-determination because of sex, race, or lack of property. We forget how long it has taken and how much hard work, blood and passion have gone into expanding the franchise and opening democracy's door so that all segments of the American population – minorities, women, youth and others – are able to have their say.

The power base of the American democracy has gradually widened, moving the nation closer to the vision set forth in the Declaration of Independence of a government that derives its power from "the consent of the governed." We give our consent whenever we participate in the democratic process and one of the important ways we give our consent is by exercising our right to vote.

There are emerging democracies around the globe where patriots continue to fight and die for the right to vote. They stand in line for hours – sometimes even for days – to exercise their hard-fought and precious new right. Why, then, are Americans turning their back on this right – the cornerstone of our democracy? What will it take to remind the American public that voting is not just a precious right, but in Lyndon Johnson's words, "the first duty of democracy"?

The strength of a democracy is measured, in large part, by the full and valued participation of all its citizens. At a time when Massachusetts is absorbed in partisan politics, the League continues

to focus on the central player in our democracy – the voter. True to its mission of encouraging an active and informed electorate, the League is determined to reverse the long-term decline in voter turnout.

Our Vote! 2004 campaign, with the mission to provide comprehensive, nonpartisan voting and election information to the citizens of Massachusetts and closing the "participation gap," is in full swing. We are specifically targeting 18-24-year-old voters, new citizens, and ethnic and racial minority groups. Our specially designed website www.votinginfo.info, DNet (www.dnet.org/MA), the *Voter's Guide* to be published as a special section of *The Boston Globe* in October, revised voting publications to include HAVA-related changes, voting videos and much more are all aimed to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of democracy.

The Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights, an historic document prepared by the League to ensure that voters clearly understand their voting rights, was signed by Governor Mitt Romney and Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin. It has also been endorsed by over 60 members of the Massachusetts Legislature under the direction of the co-chairs of the Election Laws Committee, Senator Brian Joyce and Representative William Straus. At a press conference the day before the state primary, Secretary Galvin promised that the Voters' Bill of Rights would be displayed at every polling place on Election Day, November 2. He congratulated the Massachusetts League for its initiative in producing the Voters' Bill of Rights.

The challenges of yesterday, however well met, only give way to the challenges of today, and no

THE MASSACHUSETTS VOTER

A Publication of the
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts®
133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114
(617) 523-2999 • FAX (617) 248-0881

Voter Information Phone:
(617) 723-1421 and (800) 882-1649
www.lwvma.org
ISSN 0899-4935

President Madhu Sridhar
Editor Joanna Corrado Daniel
Copy Editor Maryann Boyle Murray
Layout
Sullivan Brothers Printers, Inc.

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.

other organization is better equipped to meet these challenges than the League with a successful history of over eight decades encouraging citizen participation in government. Our society and our democracy are diminished when any group withdraws from the process, denying us their concerns, their ideas and their vision. With political stakes as high as they are, each one of us must make democracy work by encouraging our friends, family members, neighbors, business associates and others to vote. As League members, we should also share the League's rich resources to help them become active and informed voters. The health of our democracy demands nothing less.

Natick League is Back and Thriving

By Erin Pastuszewski
LWVM VP, Membership & Training

In recent years, according to a May 2003 Boston Globe article, Natick residents became "tired of the traditional partisanship that can leave a majority of residents uninterested in what's going on at Town Hall" and felt a growing desire for "a trustworthy and unbiased source of information about municipal matters." One concerned resident, current Natick League President Mary Avalos, followed up on the idea of bringing the League back to Natick by contacting the LWVM. This led to the creation of this dynamo of an organization.

The Town of Natick has a long tradition of active citizen involvement, including a strong League of Women Voters that disbanded in the mid-1980's. After a hiatus of nearly 20 years, the League of Women Voters of Natick is back in town, the newest fastest-growing League in Massachusetts. The Natick Member-at-Large Unit, formed in January 2003, requested recognition as a local League in July 2004 and has received that recognition from the state and national Leagues.

LWVM assisted the Natick residents in holding meetings to create a LWVM Member-at-Large Unit in Natick. In January 2003, having recruited mem-

bers, approved a nonpartisanship policy, elected its initial leadership team (consisting of Mary Avalos, Joan Craig, Susan Geiser, Margie Packer and Laura Senier), and set calendar events for the upcoming months, the fledgling MAL Unit was off and running. The Natick MAL Unit started out with around 20 members and grew to 79 members as of this summer, thanks to the efforts of the initial leadership team and others who joined the team last summer, including past Membership Chair Alissa Leonard.

The Natick group's record of accomplishments over the past 18 months is impressive. They sponsored three candidates' forums during local elections. They presented in 2003 and 2004 "Your Town, Your Schools, Your Budget," a public forum educating residents, including town meeting members, about municipal finance.

Last fall, the Natick MAL Unit presented an outstanding panel discussion on affordable housing and Chapter 40B, featuring speakers from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the Natick Community Development Department and the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA). Approximately 70 people attended the program, which was also broadcast on local cable TV.

The Natick League members sprang into action last December, offering an informational forum on a controversial special election issue on trash disposal. Former LWVM President Nancy Carapezza moderated the program. The forum reached a wide

audience, with around 100 people in attendance and local cable TV airings in the days before the election.

The Natick group has also assisted the town clerk with elections, created its own website (www.lwvnatick.org), published a quarterly e-newsletter for members, raised funds at the annual Natick Days, and garnered visibility through participation in the Natick Education Fund's Spelling Bee and the Fourth of July parade.

A Member-at-Large Unit is the steppingstone to becoming a full-fledged local League. A member-at-large joins the state League but does not live within the geographic boundaries of a local League. In an MAL Unit, like the one in Natick, members-at-large band together to promote the League's mission in their community, with the goal of attaining local League status in the future. Once the unit has in place by-laws and a nonpartisanship policy, a board of directors, a growing membership, a track record of League program and voters service activities, fundraising success, and plans (including a budget) for future activities, it may request recognition as a local League. Once LWVUS approves the request, a new local League has been established.

The Natick League's story offers a model for those in other communities who see a need for a local, nonpartisan political organization like the League of Women Voters. If you are interested in learning more about MAL Units or how to start a new League, please contact the LWVM Membership and Training Committee.

LWVM Program in Action:

by Diane Jeffery,
LWVM Program & Action Vice-President

The League of Women Voters, at all levels, continues to work toward shaping better communities and building an inclusive and fully participatory democracy. We persist in our role as a voice for citizens – and try to make sure that those in political power listen to what citizens have to say.

Members of the LWVM Program & Action Committee have worked hard during the past legislative session toward our goal of being an influential and powerful advocate on public policy. The following list summarizes the status of legislation that the League's Specialists have been actively supporting at the State House since the last issue of the *Voter*.

Administration of Justice

Specialist: Patricia Muldoon

- **Prison Reform Advances, But Does not Pass:** League members across the state helped lead coalition efforts to establish a Citizens Review Board for the Department of Correction. This prison oversight bill, **H4457**, got much farther than any previous attempt over the last 12 years. It took a full two years of lobbying to get the prison reform bill passed in the House. The bill was then unfortunately voted down in the Senate in a flurry of decisions taken a few days before the session ended. As disappointed as we are, we intend to keep this issue alive and will evaluate the next priorities/actions for the fall.

- **“Renew the Assault Weapon Ban” Press Conference in Boston, Covered Nationally:** I represented the LWVM at a Boston press conference to end gun violence and to promote the extension of the federal assault weapons ban. Without immediate action, the 10-year ban will expire September 13. Massachusetts was the first state to pass the assault weapons ban. Sarah Brady was in attendance and expressed her gratitude that the League actively supports the extension of the ban and that the LWVUS is actively lobbying Congress and the President to pass the ban next month. She also expressed her hope that other state leagues would get involved for the remainder of the nationwide tour promoting awareness of the ban.

Campaign Finance Reform

Specialist: Mary Ann Kenney

- The Coalition for Campaign Finance Reform, on which the LWVM has an important seat at the table, has held two meetings at the State House since our last *Voter* update. Slowly, the renewed effort to get a bill passed for public financing of elections through the legislative process is getting underway. Most discussions have occurred around how to make the proposed bill more amenable to the legislature, and to find ways to finance the plan. At the July meeting it was agreed that the group will survey the legislators on what they would like to see on this issue and identify innovative measures for campaign finance reform with a chance of passing in the legislature. Everyone on the Committee agreed that it is vital to gain the support of the legislature in these efforts. The Committee plans for a December 2004 deadline for filing this campaign finance reform bill.

Education

Specialist: Mary Frantz

- The final state budget for fiscal year 2005 includes increases in support of education in several areas. The Special Education Circuit Breaker is funded at \$201 million, a 65 percent increase over 2004. The charter school reimbursement line item is funded at \$37.7 million, up from \$13 million in 2004. METCO funding is up \$2 million and MCAS remediation is increased by \$4.1 million.
- The Governor vetoed the fiscal year 2005 charter school moratorium legislation that the LWVM was actively supported. Proposals have been put forward to change the charter school tuition formula. With a promise to address this funding issue, the legislature did not override the Governor's veto.
- The Senate has passed bill S2463 revising the Chapter 70 Education Aid formula. The League Fiscal Policy Committee is currently reviewing the bill, which is not expected to advance in the House at this time.
- The legislature recently enacted changes to the School Building Assistance (SBA) program. The legislation moves SBA out of the Department of Education to a new bonding authority administered by the State Treasurer's Office. This program is to be funded with 1 percent of the sales tax.

Environment

Specialist: MaryJane Morrin

- The League actively supported the Mercury Products bill, **S692/H2482**, which was favorably reported out of the Natural Resources Committee. This was due to a major effort by the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow Coalition, of which the LWVM is a part. A majority of both Houses signed onto a letter requesting its favorable release. Unfortunately, efforts to get the bill favorably reported out of the Joint Ways and Means Committee were not so successful and the session ended with no action on this important piece of legislation.
- We are currently monitoring and awaiting word on how much open space bond bill money will be released this year. The Secretary of Environmental Affairs will have made that announcement by the time this is published. Last year only \$18 million was allocated from this fund, which is the primary vehicle for land protection in Massachusetts. That \$18 million is less than half of last fiscal year's allocation and only about a quarter of the year before. Massachusetts spent an average of \$50 million per year during the previous 10 years.

Health Care

Specialist: Judy Deutsch

- During the last days of the formal legislative session, Governor Romney vetoed **S2272**, the bill calling for a fiscal analysis of what the Massachusetts Health Care Trust bill (universal single payer health care) would cost, and save, if enacted. For bills to pass in the informal session, there must be no objection. Although S2272 passed the Senate unanimously, there were some Representatives who voted against it. The MassCare coalition, which the LWVM is part of, has already begun work on the new version (the fifth) of the Massachusetts Health Care Trust bill that it will introduce in the next legislative session.
- The *safe staffing bill*, **H1282**, is the bill that would require hospitals to assign no more than four patients to a registered nurse. After being favorably reported by the Committee on Health Care, it was sent to a legislative Study Committee by the House Ways and Means Committee.

A Multi-Cultural Update

To accomplish its mission of encouraging informed and active citizen participation in government, the League of Women Voters is committed to supporting diversity in its principles and practices. In Massachusetts, the League has been very pro-active in reaching out to diverse ethnic and racial groups as well as to people of all ages and abilities. What follows is a multi-cultural update.

The **Vote! 2004 Campaign** targets communities that are the most underrepresented among voters, including many ethnic groups and immigrants. Its advisory committee includes Leonard C. Alkins, President of the Boston NAACP and Laura Medrano, National Vice President for the Northeast League of United Latin American Citizens.

The “all-in-one” kit, produced by the LWVM and covering the process for electing the President of the United States, includes a script, PowerPoint slides and handouts. In the past year, League members reached out to diverse communities by bringing this presentation and voting information to new voters, immigrants and homeless citizens at a senior housing complex, the YWCA in Cambridge, Pfizer Corporation, and Pine Street Inn, a homeless shelter. At ABCD, an organization which serves low-income residents in Boston through a city-wide network of Area Planning Action Councils, Neighborhood Service Centers, Head Start and Child Care Centers, a LWVM Program Assistant gave presentations to members of adult education civics classes, a group of 75 high school students, “volunteer grandparents,” and new citizens. The PowerPoint presentation was also translated into Chinese for the Chinese Progressive Association, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, and the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center. The kit, designed to make it easy for local Leagues, teachers, and others to present a succinct overview of the process and why every vote counts, is available from the LWVM office.

LWVM organized and participated in *How to Run for Public Office*, a workshop for the Indian American Forum for Political Education.

The League joined forces with community activists, and spoke and distributed LWVM voting information publications to the Hispanic community in Lawrence and Amherst, and to the Asian Center in Lawrence.

Through grants from Fleet Bank, the League is translating voting publications and voting systems videos into Spanish and possibly other languages.

Local Leagues have participated in their local multi-cultural events such as the Martin Luther King Jr. celebrations in Acton, Belmont, Melrose and Winchester and the annual LexFest in Lexington.

The Diversity Advisory Committee provides materials to encourage local Leagues and individual members to learn more about diverse cultures and to encourage dialogue and partnerships with other organizations. *Cultural Connections*, a calendar of multi-cultural activities, is distributed through the Presidents Mail, available in the *Member Resources* section of the LWVM website. The Committee always welcomes new members. If you are interested in joining the committee, please send an email to pcostello@lwwvma.org

Spotlight on Local Leagues – September 2004 Massachusetts Voter

By Lora Goldenberg
LWVM Bulletin & Minutes Reader

Annual meetings and summer board events are times for Leagues to plan their programs and activities for the 2004-2005 year.

Several Leagues are planning new local studies or completing old ones that were initiated last year. The **Belmont** League will be studying library services in their community, including the advisability of a new building with up-to-date equipment and the use and location of branch libraries. The **Norwood** League will study and respond to the recommendations of their Town Meeting-appointed committee on the capital needs of their junior and senior high schools. The **Brookline** League will continue its studies on parking in Brookline and to update their education positions.

The **Williamstown** League will continue its examination of state funding for education, including the sources of those state funds, policies for their allocation, and the distribution of that funding in Williamstown and throughout the Berkshires. The **Arlington** League will study how elections are conducted in its community.

The **Andover/North Andover** League has proposed two local studies: one to review what other communities are doing to encourage affordable housing, and the second to determine whether one community center is a better option than separate senior and youth centers. The **Waltham** League adopted a two-year study of city personnel policies and procedures. The **Westford** League will review its position on multi-family housing in order to reflect changing legislation in the area of affordable housing and chapter 40B development.

Leagues fund a great variety of scholarships and internships. The **Andover/North Andover** League is hoping to establish an internship with a state legislator, supported by their local memorial fund; they award the Ginny Cole scholarship to a high school senior who demonstrates civic involvement. The **Concord/Carlisle, Lincoln** and **Sudbury** Leagues participate in a river stewardship award. The **Medfield** League presented a \$600 scholarship to a high school senior devoted to government issues and participatory democracy. The **Marion-Mattapoisett-Rochester** League gave out more than \$4,000 in education grants in its communities. The **Norwood** League presented to their high school and library a copy of "Choosing the President 2004." The **Topsfield-Boxford-Middleton** League will try to help place four high school seniors from Masconomet Regional High School as interns in state legislators' offices.

The **Melrose** League received extensive coverage of its 55th anniversary celebration in the *Melrose Free Press*, which reviewed the history and many accomplishments of the League.

The Selectmen of the Town of **Falmouth** proclaimed June 29, 2004, as League of Women Voters' Day, in honor of the **Falmouth** League's 50th anniversary. In their proclamation, the Selectmen listed roles the League plays in their community: taking attendance at Town Meeting; helping register and educate voters and increasing voter turnout; organizing candidate forums; assisting in the formation a variety of committees in Falmouth,

including the Housing Trust, Traffic Management Committee, Coastal Resources Working Group, the local Comprehensive Plan, and the Town Charter; bringing the issues of clean water, recycling, water management, and Massachusetts Military Reservation contamination before the public; and publishing *Know Your Town, Town Meeting Procedures*, and the fourth edition of *Falmouth in Focus*.

Two Leagues took their voter participation efforts to the streets. The **Hingham** League built a float for its community's Fourth of July parade to encourage citizens to register to vote. The **Framingham** League had a red, white, and blue three-car convoy in the Framingham Flag Day parade. The cars were covered with Vote signs and were preceded and surrounded by League mem-

bers with the League banner who gave out packages of flag tattoos.

In a similar Get-Out-The-Vote vein, the **Williamstown** League is soliciting contributions to fund three billboards urging Berkshire County to vote. They hope to get the billboards rent-free and will pay to print and install the messages. The **Falmouth** League will have a monthly column in their local newspaper entitled "Ask the League," answering questions concerning voting procedures. The League will also print photographs of prominent local citizens holding a League sign which says "Democracy - The More You Use It, The Better It Gets. VOTE." The **Weston** League got up early to register newly eligible voters at the high school senior breakfast.



Risa Nyman, LWVM Executive Director, and members of Youth Opportunity Boston program following a special presentation on the Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights in July. Youth Opportunity is a federal funded job readiness program that provides a variety of educational, social, and recreational activities to help young people (14-21 years) prepare for the world of work and to further their education.

Fall Conference workshops to cover varied topics

By Lynn Cohen
LWVM Executive Vice President

The workshops offered at this year's Fall Conference on October 30 reflect the range of topics and issues the League encompasses. Conference attendees can choose from workshops on voters service, how local Leagues can benefit from an election year to increase membership, and three sessions on important and high-profile public policy issues. The workshops run from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. and are open to all conference attendees.

Campaign Finance Reform – What is the Way will focus on the current research on campaign finance reform efforts and what the research has shown: what works, what doesn't, what can be learned from other states, and where Massachusetts should go from here.

Justice in Massachusetts? will help attendees understand the challenges to the state's justice system. This workshop will focus on what actions can be taken now to reform the courts, prisons and offender reentry into our communities. The discussion will be based on recent studies that have both shown the scope of the system's problems and recommended a number of constructive changes. Judge James Dolan, who wrote a groundbreaking study of the court system, will be on the panel,

along with a member of the Harshbarger Commission for corrections reform. Patricia Muldoon, LWVM Administration of Justice Specialist, will lead the panel.

No Better Time to Ask: League Membership in an Election Year will encourage discussion about how local Leagues can restructure and redirect their member recruiting *now* to attract a wide range of new members for their Leagues. It will be led by LWVM Membership & Training Vice President Erin Pastuszynski and LWVM board member Gerri Weathers, also a member of the League's Membership & Training and Diversity Advisory committees.

Solving the Health Care Crisis? will cover the status of efforts to improve the delivery and control the costs of health care in the United States. Members of LWVM's knowledgeable Health Care Committee will explain why the League supports single-payer universal health care and describe ongoing attempts at the local, state and national levels to alleviate the current health care crisis. They will also make a presentation on the merits and faults of the new Medicare Act.

Voters Service Tools – Make Them Work for You! features LWVM's Citizen Education Committee presenting all the Voters Service resources available to local Leagues. This workshop will help participants learn how they can use these resources creatively in their communities to educate citizens, give visibility to their Leagues, and be a catalyst for citizen education.

Voting Systems Study: A Look Back and a Look Forward

By Bernadette Buck

LWVM Board Director & Voting Systems Study Chair

Do you have trouble finding a candidate who really represents your views? Have you hesitated to vote for a minor-party candidate, not wanting to waste your vote or contribute to a “spoiler” candidate? Are you tired of political campaigns that focus on mudslinging rather than policy? Do you sometimes feel you have to choose between the lesser of two evils? Or is your district so skillfully gerrymandered that it has not been competitive for years?

As the Massachusetts League enters the second and final year of the voting systems study, it's time for local Leagues and League members to grapple with possible solutions to some of these questions, as voting systems have surprising and far-reaching effects on political campaigns and voter experience.

Background

The study was adopted at the LWVM Convention in May, 2003 “to examine the process and effectiveness of voting systems for state and local elections, such as plurality voting, instant run-off voting, proportional voting and propose a new position through consensus or concurrence.” The mechanism of various voting systems was to come under scrutiny.

For example, in Massachusetts legislators are chosen using the voting system called single-member district plurality: the state is split into districts, each of which elects a single member of the legislature, and a candidate wins by obtaining a plurality of the vote – more than any other candidate.

Since this system is so prevalent in the United States, it comes as a surprise to many that there are other quite different systems in use, both in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world. They can be grouped into three families of systems: plurality and majority systems, of which our system is a

part; proportional representation systems, which endeavor to award seats in the legislature to political parties in proportion to their support in the electorate; and semi-proportional representation systems, which fall somewhere in between and have some characteristics of each.

The choice of system has profound effects on the political process. The problems listed above – limited choices in candidates, the lesser-of-two-evils dynamic, and widespread gerrymandering – are either caused by or made possible by our use of the single-member district plurality contests.

Local League Participation

Local Leagues participating in the study have been asked to hold two workshop meetings and a consensus meeting and then file a consensus report.

Workshop I covers which voting systems can be used to elect a single executive office such as governor or mayor. Workshop II covers the proportional and semi-proportional systems, which can only be used in electing multi-member bodies such as a legislature or a school committee. The workshop meetings are designed to be easy to run; each workshop includes a complete leader's guide and handouts. Members of the state study committee are available to help run the meetings or to attend as resource people. The workshops have been sent to all League presidents and are available online under the Member Resources section of the LWVM website (www.lwvma.org/member.shtml).

Seeking Consensus

The consensus process, a time-honored tradition of League work, involves local Leagues holding meetings of their members to consider the central questions raised by the study. In this study's case, these questions are currently being formulated, but the general theme is known: with so many possible voting systems, and so much influence of the voting system on our electoral process, what effects do we want any good voting system to have?

As part of the discussion, League members may find themselves grappling with issues like the following: Should a voting system ensure that significant minor parties are able to win at least some seats in the legislature? Or do we instead support the continuation of the two-party system and expect the

two parties to act as “umbrellas” which include as many people as possible? How important is it to reduce the influence of gerrymandering? Would we be willing to give up our small, single-representative districts in favor of larger, multi-member districts if doing so would virtually eliminate gerrymandering and promote competitive elections?

Timeline

Consensus reports are due to the LWVM office by February 28, 2005. Local Leagues that are not able to hold three meetings should consider encouraging members to participate through the online consensus process.

Online Consensus

For the first time, the League is making an online consensus process available for those League members who are members-at-large (not members of a local League) or whose local League does not intend to hold a consensus meeting. The online consensus process uses an email discussion group to come to consensus. The process, managed by the state study committee, is starting now and will run through February. League members who are interested are encouraged to contact Bernadette Buck, the study chair, for more information.

For more information on the study, check the Member Resources section of the LWVM website, or contact Bernadette Buck, Chair, Voting Systems Study, 617-523-2999 or at bbuck@lwvma.org.

Election/Voting Publications

These pamphlets and booklets are complimentary

- Voting in Massachusetts is a comprehensive pamphlet on voter registration, provisional ballots, absentee voting and more.
- Absentee Voting deals exclusively with the procedures to vote by absentee ballot
- Where Do I Vote: Q & A for College Students answers the questions college students have about where to register to vote and how to vote absentee
- Who Really Elects the President? explains the workings of the Electoral College whose impact on the presidential election is now well known to most Americans
- Your Rights at the Polls includes the Massachusetts Voters' bill of Rights and information about what voters should do if they feel their rights were violated.
Shipping & handling for the above: \$4 for 25 pamphlets; \$5 for 50; \$9 for 100
- Vote, It's in Your Best Interest, a booklet that guides people through the complexities of campaigning, including how to watch a debate and analyze campaign tactics.
Shipping & handling for the above: \$6 for 25 booklets; \$9 for 50; \$12 for 100

To order call the Massachusetts League at 617-523-2999 or e-mail lwvma@lwvma.org.

What if your name does not appear on the voters' lists?

If your name is not on the voters' list or the inactive voters' list, or is listed incorrectly, you can still vote. You can go to your local election office to further investigate your eligibility. The election official will research voter registration records. If proof of your having registered is found, the official will issue you a certificate. You can vote at the election office by absentee ballot or take the certificate back to your polling place to vote.

OR you can vote by PROVISIONAL BALLOT.

Provisional voting means that every voter coming to the polls on Election Day will be able to cast a ballot. A provisional ballot will be given to anyone who declares that he or she is eligible to vote but whose name does not appear on the voters' lists; to anyone whose name or other information is listed incorrectly on the voters' lists; or under certain circumstances to voters who are voting for the first time (see above). If the voter is later determined to be eligible, that vote will be counted.

How do I vote by provisional ballot?

You will be asked to show suitable identification with your name and current address. This includes a driver's license, recent utility bill, rent receipt on a landlord's letterhead, lease, duplicate copy of a voter registration form, or any other printed identification that includes name and address. You must also fill out a provisional ballot affirmation to receive a provisional ballot. After voting, place your provisional ballot in the numbered envelope provided and seal and return it to the election official.

How will I know if my provisional ballot was counted?

You will receive an information sheet that gives instructions about calling your local election office or the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, 617-727-2828 or 800-462-VOTE, to find out if your vote was counted. This information will be available seven days after a primary election and 20 days after a general election.

(continued from page 1 Final Stretch)

The Massachusetts League is working to make sure that voters understand the process for voter registration, including the new identification requirements, and that they know how to find their polling place and what to do if their name is not on the voters' lists.

This election year, as in the past, the LWVM office staff and volunteers provide advice, assistance and materials to hundreds of individuals and groups who want to conduct voter registration drives. Our recently updated voting publications, made possible by a grant from the Bank of America, explain many aspects of the voting process and include details about the changes to voter registration forms and requirements. [See the box on page 6 that describes these publications and how to order them.] LWVM staff and volunteers are also making presentations to many organizations about the voting process.

2. Erroneous purging: In some states in 2000 names were erroneously removed from the voters' list. A voter must know what recourse is available if his or her name was incorrectly removed from the voting list. The Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights, developed by the League, delineates each voter's fundamental rights; this November it will be posted at every polling place. The Voters' Bill of Rights will ensure that voters who believe their names have been incorrectly dropped from the voters' list or who have been incorrectly prevented from voting for any other reason will know their rights and how to proceed if they feel their rights have been violated.

The Massachusetts Legislature recently passed a resolution enthusiastically endorsing the Voters' Bill of Rights, which had been previously signed by Governor Mitt Romney and Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin.

3. Problems with the new ID requirement: The Help America Vote Act requires that first-time applicants who register by mail present identification prior to voting unless the state has already verified their identity. This requirement must be uniformly implemented and be nondiscriminatory. Recognizing that the new ID requirement could create problems, the League is making a concerted effort to reach out to first-time voters, especially 18-24 year olds, so that they are prepared to bring proper ID with them to the polls. The League's **Vote! 2004** website, www.votinginfo.info, answers questions about ID requirements in clear language.

4. Difficulties with voting systems: Unfamiliarity with a voting system leads to confusion on Election Day. To ensure that Massachusetts voters are well-informed about procedures at the polls, the League has produced, with support from Bank of America, brief videos demonstrating step-by-step procedures for each of the voting systems used in Massachusetts.

Some voters, especially young voters and new citizens, stay away from the polls rather than confront an unknown situation – not knowing what questions they will be asked or what information they have to present. Because young people get so much of their information on the Internet, our voting videos are posted on www.votinginfo.info.

[See the box on this page for information about how to order these 10-minute videos for use at meetings or for broadcast on cable TV.]

5. Failure to count provisional ballots: Provisional ballots are intended to be a safeguard when a voter's eligibility is in question on Election

Day. Provisional ballots are a positive result of HAVA; every eligible voter who goes to the polls will be able to cast a ballot. Provisional ballots help to ensure that voters are not disenfranchised.

Provisional ballots must be processed and counted correctly and voters must understand the process. By providing information on how the provisional ballot system works, who can vote by provisional ballot, what determines if the ballot is counted, and how voters can find out if their provisional ballot was counted, the League is expanding voters' understanding of their rights.

[See the box on page 6 that answers some of the common questions about provisional ballots.]

Leagues Can Help Safeguard the Vote

By Carol Reimers

LWVM Citizen Education Vice President

The 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) was intended to ensure that eligible voters are able to cast a vote and have that vote accurately counted. While much of the discussion about HAVA implementation has been about new technologies – primarily new voting machines and computerized statewide registration systems – sound administrative practices are equally necessary to ensure that elections are run both fairly and accurately.

The League of Women Voters of the United States has recently published an excellent report on this topic called "Safeguarding the Vote." Focusing on the administrative framework that is needed to meet the goals of greater accessibility, accuracy and security, the report offers a set of recommendations for election officials that protect eligible voters, ensure valid votes will be counted, and bolster voters' confidence. The recommendations are based on practices already in use in various communities across the country.

Local Leagues and their members can use the report's recommendations to work with local election officials to implement those practices that are not in use in their communities. "Safeguarding the Vote" is online at www.lwv.org/elibrary/pub/voting_safeguarding_color.pdf. Of the report's 21 recommendations, the following may be of special interest to Massachusetts Leagues.

• *Recommendation: Require bipartisan or third-party monitoring of sensitive election procedures.*

Procedures that may be vulnerable or perceived as vulnerable to tampering and manipulation should be conducted under the watchful gaze of partisan and nonpartisan observers. Sensitive election procedures include distribution of ballots and deployment of voting systems to polling places; programming and testing of voting machines, including optical scanners; opening and closing the polls; maintenance and trouble-shooting; and the process of counting ballots, including provisional ballots.

• *Recommendation: Require tracking and documentation of all procedures, from the testing of the machines to the handling of ballots.*

It is important to require staff and poll workers to record their activities especially in regard to security. This documentation will allow for an audit trail to be used in the event of equipment failure or other problem.

• *Recommendation: Require transparency in the operation and management of voting systems.*

The entire administration of a voting system, from purchase to post-election maintenance, should

be open and transparent. Election officials must ensure that the procedures involved in readying systems for Election Day are fully open and accountable. Certain tests should be conducted in public; counting operations should be open to public scrutiny as well.

• *Recommendation: Test every voting machine to ensure it is operating properly.*

While this task can be time-consuming, it is crucial that voting machines are ready to work on Election Day. Election officials should execute these tests for optimal performance when the machines are used.

• *Recommendation: Restrict physical access to all components of voting systems.*

There should be procedures in place to guarantee that at no time are ballots, optical scanners, voting machines or records physically vulnerable. This includes the servers and other computer equipment involved in the process of administering the election. The location where these items are stored should be completely secure. Physical security encompasses the voting process on Election Day as well.

• *Recommendation: Educate voters on the use of all voting equipment in advance of the election as well on in the polling place on Election Day.*

Voters need clear instructions on the voting process. Pre-election outreach can include taking voting systems to malls, grocery stores and community centers, as hands-on demonstrations are more effective than written instructions. LWVM has produced videos that demonstrate all the voting systems used in Massachusetts. They are available on our websites www.lwvma.org and www.votinginfo.info, and can be purchased from the League office for use at meetings and for broadcast on cable TV.

• *Recommendation: Provide adequate election worker training before elections and ensure adequate technical support to poll workers on Election Day.*

Poll workers must be trained to ensure the physical security of the voting system, to start and end the voting process correctly, to assist voters who may have difficulty voting, and to protect the voter's privacy. In-house expertise should be developed for the technical support of voting systems. A properly staffed poll workers hotline could provide a means for coping with technical problems.

The creation of a secure, accountable, open, and accessible voting system is essential for voters to feel that elections work in this country. The League can play a major role in moving this process forward.

Videos of Voting Systems

Each video is about 10 minutes and takes the viewer step-by-step through the voting procedures starting with the check-in. The tapes are generic and can be used for national, state and local elections. They can be used at voter registration events, high schools, colleges, and on local cable stations.

Videotapes & DVDs: \$13 each. Shipping & handling additional

Videos available for:

Accuvote – Optech – Paper Ballot

To find out which voting system is used in your community, go to www.lwvma.org/votingentertown.shtml or call the Massachusetts League office at 617-523-2999.

To order call the Massachusetts League at 617-523-2999 or e-mail lwvma@lwvma.org

LWVM Citizen Education Fund

Fall Conference Our Choices, Our Future Vote! 2004

**9:30 a.m. KEYNOTE SPEAKER****Dolores L. Mitchell**

Vice President, Political Planning, National Women's Political Caucus
Founding member, Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus

10:15 PANEL DISCUSSION: Our Choices, Our Future*Health Care***Judith Kurland**

former Regional Director for the
Department of Health and Human Services

*Security***Harvey Sapolsky**

Director, Security Studies Program at MIT

*Education***Paul Reville**

Executive Director, Rennie Center for
Education Research & Policy, MassINC

*The Economy***John Walgreen**

Director of the Public Policy Program,
Wheaton College

**12 noon LUNCH
FEATURED SPEAKER**

Martha Coakley

Middlesex County District Attorney

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. WORKSHOPS

- Voters Service Tools – Make Them Work for You!
- Justice in Massachusetts?
- Solving the Healthcare Crisis?
- Campaign Finance Reform – What is the Way
- No Better Time to Ask – League Membership in an Election Year

REGISTRATION RESERVATIONS

The fee for the Conference is \$25, which covers admission
to the Conference, lunch & the afternoon workshops.

Advance registration & payment are required by Wednesday, October 20.

To make reservations:

Call the LWVM office at 617-523-2999 by October 20, to make your reservations using a credit card.

Or complete & return this reservation form:

Name _____ Local League (if applicable) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Number of reservations @ \$25 each _____ Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Make check payable to LWVM Citizen Education Fund

Or pay by credit card:

Credit card number _____ Expiration date (mo/yr) _____

Visa MasterCard American Express

Mail this form & payment by Wednesday, October 20 to:

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, 133 Portland St. Boston, MA 02114

Directions**Quincy Marriott Hotel**

1000 Marriott Drive, Quincy – 617-472-1000

From Boston:

Take I-93 South to Exit 7 (Route 3 South).
Immediately take Exit 18.

*** Stay in far-left lane, following signs for Quincy Center. At first set of lights take a left onto Centre St. Bear left at the next set of lights into Crown Colony Office Park. The hotel driveway will be one-quarter mile on your left.

From the north/Mass Pike:

Take I-95/128 South, which will turn into I-93 North. Follow I-93 North to Exit 7 (Route 3 South). Take Exit 18. Follow directions from *** above.

From Cape Cod/Plymouth:

Take Rte. 3 North to Exit 19. Follow directions from *** above.

Public Transportation

Take the MBTA - Red Line to Quincy Adams stop. It's one mile to the hotel. Taxis are available.