



# THE MASSACHUSETTS VOTER

July 2004

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

Volume 80, Number 3

## Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights

Your voting rights are protected. These rights are guaranteed to qualified, registered voters.

- You have the right** to vote if you are a qualified registered voter.
- You have the right** to cast your ballot in a manner that ensures privacy. You have the right to vote without any person trying to influence your vote and to vote in a booth that prevents others from watching you mark your ballot.
- You have the right** to remain in the voting booth for five minutes if there are other voters waiting and for ten minutes if there are no other voters waiting.
- You have the right** to receive up to two replacement ballots if you make a mistake and spoil your ballot.
- You have the right** to request assistance when voting from a poll worker or anyone of your choice, except your employer or an officer of your union or their representatives.
- You have the right** to vote if you are disabled. The polling place must be accessible, and there must be an accessible voting booth.
- You have the right** to vote if you cannot read or write or cannot read or write English.
- You are required** to show identification if: you are a first-time voter who registered to vote by mail and did not submit identification with the voter registration form; or your name is on the inactive voter list; or your vote is being challenged; or if requested by the poll worker. Acceptable forms of identification are: Massachusetts driver's license, other printed documentation containing your name and address such as a recent utility bill, rent receipt on landlord's letterhead, lease, duplicate copy of a voter registration affidavit.
- You have the right** to vote by absentee ballot if: you will be absent from your city or town on Election Day; or if you have a physical disability that prevents your voting at the polling place; or if you cannot vote at the polls due to religious belief.
- You have the right** to cast a provisional ballot if a poll worker tells you that you are ineligible to vote for any reason.
- You have the right** to follow-up any challenge to your right to vote through the complaint process.
- You have the right** to vote if you are not currently incarcerated for a felony conviction and have registered as a voter after your release.
- You have the right** to take this Voters' Bill of Rights or any other papers, including a sample ballot, voter guide or campaign material, into the voting booth with you. Please remember to remove all papers when you leave the booth.
- You have the right** to vote at your polling place any time between 7 am and 8 pm for state and federal elections—hours may vary for local elections. If you are in line at your polling place when the polls close at 8 pm, you have the right to vote.
- You have the right** to bring your children into the voting booth with you.

If you feel that your right to vote has been violated in any way, call the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Elections Division at 1-800-462-VOTE (8683). This call is free within Massachusetts.

William F. Galvin  
Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Madhu Sridhar  
President League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Prepared by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

## League Introduces Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights



LWV President Madhu Sridhar and The Honorable William Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth, sign the Voters' Bill of Rights at the State House on June 16th with The Honorable Lucy Wilson Benson, Honorary Chair, VOTE! 2004 Campaign.

By Risa Nyman  
LWV Executive Director

The Secretary of the Commonwealth, William F. Galvin, and the President of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, Madhu Sridhar, jointly signed a Voters' Bill of Rights for Massachusetts Citizens on June 16, 2004 at the Statehouse.

This document, prepared by the League, will ensure that voters clearly understand their voting rights in simple language. Some of these rights are rights granted to Massachusetts citizens as part of the enacted Help America Vote Act which was passed in the wake of the Election 2000 debacle.

Voting is the way all citizens participate directly in our democracy. It is so fundamental, but many citizens are unsure of their rights at the polls. The fifteen rights in the Voters' Bill of Rights include some of the most basic such as:

- The right to vote in privacy – the most basic and most important voting concept that keeps our democracy free;
- The right to cast a provisional ballot if you are not

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Madhu Sridhar  
LWVM President

### The Case Against Reinstating the Death Penalty

More than 50 years after the last legal execution in Massachusetts, the death penalty continues to resurface as an issue year after year. A commission, appointed by Gov. Mitt Romney, recently proposed new legal and scientific safeguards that the panel claimed would create a nearly foolproof death penalty system.

Composed of seven attorneys and four forensic specialists, the Governor's Council on Capital Punishment was responding to the task the governor gave it. According to the administration's press release, the panel was appointed "to craft a proposal to reinstate capital punishment in Massachusetts for a narrow set of crimes." Because it wasn't asked to, the panel did not address whether bringing the death penalty back to Massachusetts is good public policy.

The Governor's Council on Capital Punishment has offered a number of recommendations to try to make death penalty convictions fairer with rules covering evidence and procedures. Some of its suggestions, such as ensuring high-quality defense representation, might be useful to incorporate throughout the courts. However, legislation cannot correct such flaws as eyewitness error, misinterpretation of forensic evidence, false testimony, police and prosecutorial misconduct, and arbitrary factors such as race, class, and jury that can produce different outcomes using the same evidence.

In 1985, Massachusetts League members reached a strong consensus opposing the death penalty. Since then we have worked successfully with several coalitions to defeat every attempt to reintroduce capital punishment here. The panel's proposals do not change our position because capital punishment, in any form, is still decidedly unsound public policy.

Studies have shown that capital punishment has no deterrent value. Massachusetts abolished capital

punishment in 1984 and has not executed anyone since 1947. Yet we consistently have one of the nation's lowest homicide rates (and the lowest among urban states). According to 2002 data from the FBI and the state's Executive Office of Public Safety, Massachusetts ranked 38th with 2.7 homicides for every 100,000 people. Most of the states with lower murder rates were more sparsely populated.

In contrast, Texas, a state with frequent use of the death penalty, has one of the highest rates. Those who commit crimes do not consider that they will be caught. In the case of premeditated crime, the offender expects to evade apprehension. Most homicides are "impulsive actions, crimes of passion," in which the killers do not consider the consequences of what they are doing.

Michael A. Ponsor, a federal judge in Springfield, has said, "The suggestion that it would be possible to construct a process for determining the appropriateness of capital punishment in particular cases that would be, over time, infallible or nearly infallible is not consistent with my experience." Ponsor was the presiding judge at the trial of Kristin Gilbert, the nurse at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center convicted in 2001 of four counts of first-degree murder and three counts of attempted murder for injecting her patients with a heart stimulant. A government forensic pathologist in this case was forced to recant his findings when it was discovered that he had made an error in arithmetic. Judge Ponsor said he is unconvinced that a flawless, scientific process could be devised to ensure that no innocent person is ever put to death.

The number of inmates on death row across the country who have been found innocent shows that mistakes are inevitable. Many death row prisoners have been released after newly discovered evidence, revelations of inadequate representation or witness error. Many have been executed despite serious

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### 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.

doubts about their guilt. Our appeals system as well as the criminal court system has several flaws and limitations and exonerating those wrongly convicted requires both time and luck.

Many studies have also shown that the death penalty is disproportionately imposed on ethnic minorities, the poor and those of questionable mental competence. Inadequate counsel, bias and political pressures make it difficult to apply the death penalty fairly and consistently.

For all these reasons, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts continues to oppose the death penalty. There is no need to kill in the name of the state in order to express our outrage and keep us safe. A life sentence without parole accomplishes both purposes. For the moment, Massachusetts holds true to the belief that civilized people will not tolerate the state putting a human being to death. The issue, however, remains volatile, and the struggle is not over.

## The Vote! 2004 Campaign Reaches Out to the Next Generation of Voters and Leaders

By Risa Nyman  
LWVM Executive Director

A primary target group of the **Vote! 2004 Campaign** are the youth in Massachusetts. It is a challenge to improve the dismal statistics of only 30% turnout of the 18-24 year old voters in the last presidential election. And it is a challenge to create a message that will resonate with young people to emphasize to them that the outcome of the election will have direct bearing on their lives and their futures.

The **Vote! 2004 Campaign's** website, [www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info), was designed after conducting focus groups with college students to learn what they wanted and need in a nonpartisan election and voting website. The monthly election quiz and election newsletter, and the electronic election reminder service are all features of this website that are geared to inform and encourage young people to get involved in the electoral process.

Also in an effort to get young people more

knowledgeable about elections, the League is increasing its use of college interns to work on Campaign projects, such the Voters Guide in *The Boston Globe* and the online voters guide on the DemocracyNet website ([www.dnet.org/ma](http://www.dnet.org/ma)). Some interns will receive academic credit for their work with the League.

Another important part of the League's outreach to future voters and leaders is through the Citizen Education Committee's participation in the YMCA's Youth & Government program in Massachusetts, which is directed by Jo-Ann Berry, a member of LWVM Board of Directors. In this special program, student delegations meet at high schools and YMCAs on a weekly basis to learn and practice bill and legal brief writing, public speaking and debate, how to run for office, how to run a committee, to be a good committee member, and more.

The Citizen Education Committee helps to select the Best House and Best Senate bills written by these high schools students. This is a natural partnership because the YMCA Youth &

Government program and the League of Women Voters share common goals to encourage, educate, and train people about government. Other youth organizations seek out the League for guidance and information about elections and voting, such as the girl scouts and the YouthVote Coalition.

The League recognizes that the future of our democracy will be strengthened if the next generation is prepared to take up their role as leaders and to assume their rights and responsibilities as voters.

Melissa Williams, an intern who worked with the League this past year, wrote, "Through these (Vote! 2004 Campaign) projects, I've learned the day-to-day workings of a nonprofit. This is the type of experience that Harvard couldn't teach. Simply answering the Voter Information Phone on a daily basis taught me more about the Massachusetts state government than I ever thought I would know. There's not a textbook for this kind of work. The most important thing that I've learned at the League is that everyday citizens do want to learn about elections and voting."



Diane Jeffery, VP Program & Action, leads the Massachusetts delegation lobbying Senator Kerry on behalf of the LWVUS in support of the Security And Freedom Ensured (S.A.F.E.) Act.

## LWVM Program & 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 LWVM's 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 over the last few months.

### Administration of Justice

#### Specialist: Patricia Muldoon

- **Prison oversight:** The House passed an outside section on their budget to create a citizens review board, but this version does not meet the League's expectations. The Senate passed a budget amendment to create an inspector general of correction to investigate and remediate complaints of retaliation and abuse in prison – which could work well in tandem with a strong review board. Both amendments went to the Joint Conference Committee. **H4457 – Establish a Citizens Correction Review Board** is before the House Bills in Third Reading. The next step is debate on the House Floor.
- **Court reform:** We are working with the Citizens Coalition for an Independent Judiciary to introduce a bill to implement the Monan Commission recommendations to establish court accountability and reform.
- The other bills we have been following have all been moved "for study," which means the Legislature plans to take no action this session. These include: **S167 – Reform Mandatory Minimum Sentences; H1180 – Treatment of Mentally Ill Prisoners; and H2493 – Recidivism Reports on Solitary Confinement.**

### Campaign Finance Reform

#### Specialist: Mary Ann Kenney

- LWVM continues to meet with the Clean Elections Coalition and is a member of the committee organized by Sen. Brian Joyce and Rep. Jay Kaufman. Both groups continue working for

a new plan of action for campaign finance reform. The Joyce/Kaufman Committee has divided into three subcommittees to study public financing of elections; disclosure laws, and voluntary media coverage agreements.

This committee is also developing and administering an internal polling/questionnaire to ask legislators what they would like to focus on with respect to campaign finance reform.

### Education

#### Specialist: Mary Frantz

- It appears that the Legislature will take no action to reform the Chapter 70 education aid distribution formula before the end of the current session. The League's bill, **S321/H2404**, along with all other Chapter 70-related bills, was sent to a study committee. Both the House and Senate budgets propose an increase of \$72.8 million (2.34%) in Chapter 70 aid for FY05 with new aid going to 112 districts that would otherwise fall below foundation-level funding. All other districts will be level-funded at the FY04 level.
- Both the House and Senate budgets propose funding of the Special Education Circuit Breaker program at \$201 million for FY05, a 65% increase. This will give all districts higher state reimbursements for costly special education students.
- Both the House and Senate have approved Charter School moratorium amendments to their budgets. The amendments suspend the authority of the Board of Education to grant new commonwealth charters and to allow any new schools to open or any existing schools to expand beyond the enrollment authorized in their charters until July 31, 2005. The amendment establishes a working group to make recommendations on the charter school financing system and approval process.

### Equal Rights

#### Specialist: Elizabeth Dunn

- **An Act to Provide for Equitable Coverage in Annuity Policies, S888/H3537**, received a study order from the Insurance Committee, so Representative Ruth Balser filed it as an amendment to the House budget. This forced a debate and vote, which the Speaker had refused to allow for many years. Although the vote failed, the bill got good strong support and we are moving ahead. League members should be ready to respond to another action alert.

### Fiscal Policy

#### Specialist: Setha Olson

- Setha Olson was quoted in the *Waltham Daily News Tribune* with an explanation of the Lottery distribution formula, a formula the LWVM Fiscal Policy Committee developed in the 1970's for other purposes and then was "co-opted" by the Legislature.

### Health Care

#### Specialist: Judy Deutsch

- This is an exciting time for advocates of single-payer universal healthcare. As of this writing, we are awaiting and lobbying for favorable action on **S2272** by the House Ways and Means Committee and then the full House. S2272 is the bill created by the Joint Health Care Committee calling for the Division of Public Policy and Finance to provide a fiscal analysis by November 1, 2004 of what it would cost, and what it would save, to implement **S686, the Mass Health Care Trust Bill**. S686 would establish single-payer universal

health care. S2272 passed the Senate; it still has to pass the House and be signed by the governor.

- 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 remains in the House Way and Means Committee.

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## March For Women's Lives Draws One Million to Rally

By Betsy Dunn

Specialist Equal Rights/Reproductive Rights

The March For Women's Lives on April 25 was a greater success than anyone had dared to hope. The picture of the Mall, between the Washington Monument and the Capital, was testimony to the one million who attended. These women, men and children of all ages, races, creeds and nationalities who believe that women's lives are more important than patriarchal dictates about women's roles in society.

Since my first march in 1970, I have attended many others for both the Equal Rights Amendment and for Reproductive Rights. I went reluctantly this time, but was soon proved wrong. I wouldn't have missed it for anything! From the moment we entered the Metro on Sunday morning until the rally ended, it was thrilling to be with so many high-spirited and like-minded people.

The logistics were flawless, thanks to Alice Cohen who started honing her skills as a March mastermind in 1978 for the ERA extension. The program didn't leave out a single constituency and it was easy to see and hear everything on one of the vast TV screens placed every 2-3 blocks up the Mall. There was a large delegation of doctors and nurses in their scrubs. There was a delegation of representatives from 57 countries with their national flags protesting the gag rule on international family planning funds, and dozens more parading across the stage and stopping to speak their piece for all to see and hear. I hope many of you were there too to share the joy of it.

## Update on Medicare Law

Judy Deutsch

Program Specialist, Health Care

LWVUS asked Congress to vote against the infamous new Medicare Law. Among many other things, the new Medicare Law prohibits state governments from negotiating with drug companies for lower prices and it continues the outlawing of the purchase of pharmaceuticals from Canada.

All of our Congressional delegation voted against this, and deserves our thanks.

If you are a senior citizen, you may have already come up against the 70-plus cards (and their accompanying plans) that you may choose among. If you buy one of the cards, you are locked into its accompanying plan for a year even if the costs of the drugs included in the plan rise during that year!

**Senator Kennedy has called for the entire bill to be revoked.**

## Spotlight on Local Leagues, May 2004

By Lora Goldenberg  
LWVM Bulletin & Minutes Reader

As local Leagues finish the busy season of local elections and town meetings, many have held informational forums and citizen education programs.

One of the co-presidents of the **Melrose** League, Amy Rosenberg, in response to a letter to the editor in the local paper, which criticized a League-sponsored forum on the PATRIOT Act, wrote "we need to protect both our freedoms and our security." The **Melrose** League will be celebrating its 55th anniversary this year. Long time members will speak about how the League was instrumental in forming in Melrose the Alliance Against Violence and the Human Rights Commission, in organizing the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life, and in establishing recycling.

The **Weston** League held a program called "Town Government 101." It covered town population statistics, the structure of Weston government, how the town pays for services, the budget cycle, property tax assessments, and how to participate in Town Meeting.

"Flood Mitigation in Winchester" was the title of a forum organized by the **Winchester** League, with a panel that included Public Works officials and the Town's mitigation consultant. The **Framingham** League sponsored a forum on "Metro West Growth Conservation," answering the

questions: How do we maintain our quality of life, and is "smart growth" right for us?

The **Norwood** League held an informational meeting to help citizens evaluate the proposed Senior and Junior High School renovation project, including the pros and cons and the educational and financial impacts. The **Williamstown** League ran a forum on "Funding Education: The Effect of State Budget Cuts on our Public Schools." The **Needham** League co-sponsored a roundtable on "The Impact of Charter School Funding on Public Schools."

In the midst of their more League-mission oriented activities, many local Leagues have been raising money. The **Medfield** League held a fundraiser including a wine tasting, hors d'oeuvres and desserts at a local gallery. The **Westwood-Walpole** League is planning its annual antique show. The **Brookline** League also raises money for its Sara K. Wallace Fund, which underwrites the cost of all voters service activities with a wine and hors d'oeuvres event featuring a local singing group. The **Newton** League will be enjoying champagne and chocolate in support of their local activities. The **North Reading** League will hold its traditional giant yard sale.

The **Plymouth** League follows an issue unique to them amongst all other Massachusetts local Leagues. Their Nuclear Issues Study Group attended a Nuclear Regulatory Commission hearing giving a "report card" on the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant. The Plymouth League members expressed concern that there was almost no Town of Plymouth attendance at the hearing, which gave the nuclear power plant a good grade despite ongoing incidents and no solution for spent fuel rods.

### LWV of Massachusetts MARKETPLACE SPOTLIGHT

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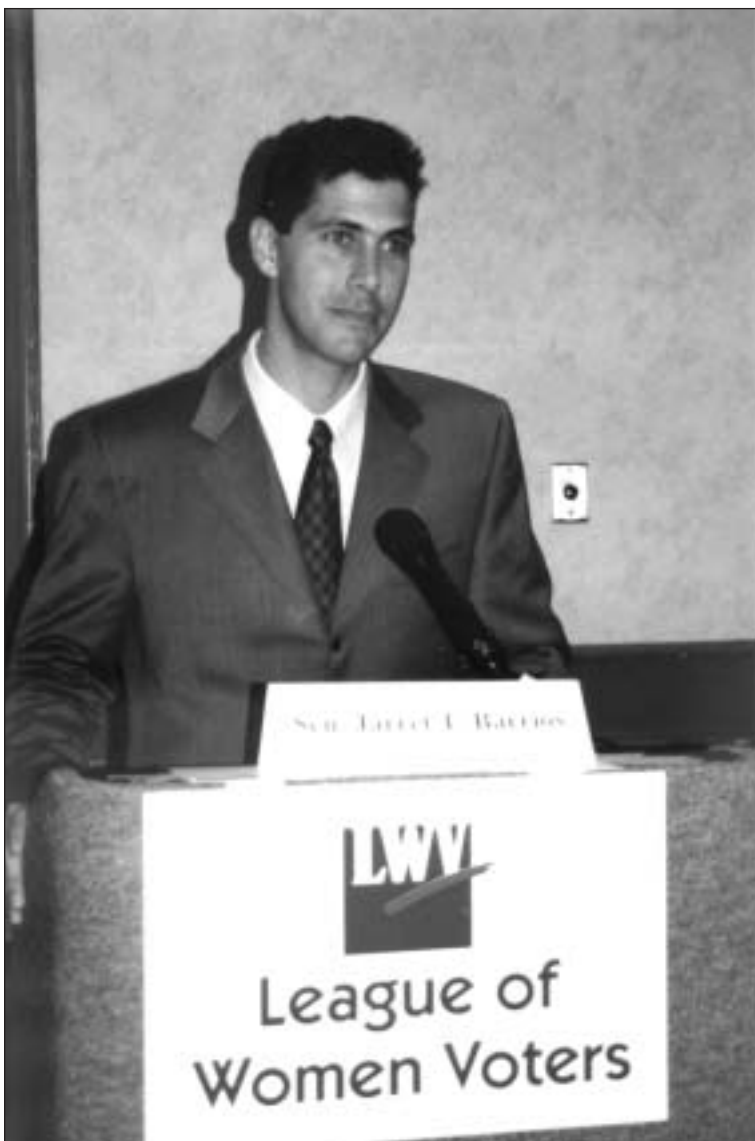


Representatives of Leagues winning Membership Award at LWVM Council 2004: Acton Area, Hamilton/Wenham, Hingham, Lexington, Medfield, Needham, Swampscott (not present), Wellesley (not present), Westford, Westwood/Walpole and Williamstown (not present).

# Council 2004 Shaping the Future: League Membership Grows



Cape Cod League Members Jari Rapaport, Florence Seldin, and Terry Chesney



Keynote Speaker at LWVM Council 2004, State Senator Jarrett Barrios, is a strong advocate of bringing youth, new citizens and members of minority groups into the electoral and political process

LWVM President Madhu Sridhar introduces the newest member of the League, State Senator Jarrett Barrios



## LWVM Educates Foreign Visitors about U.S. Democracy

By Lynn Cohen  
LWVM Executive Vice President

This past year LWVM representatives met with several visitors from abroad who wanted to learn more about democracy in the United States. Four of these five meetings were arranged by WorldBoston, a nonprofit group promoting international understanding and exchange. These visitors were traveling across the country under the auspices of the International Visitor Program of the United States Department of State. One visitor, from Armenia, arranged his meeting with the League himself.

President Madhu Sridhar took part in all the meetings. "These visitors came to the League because of our experience in working for the public interest," she said. "But what we found is that we were fascinated to learn as much about the countries our visitors came from as they learned from us."

Madhu and Program Specialist Carma Forgie met with two governors from Bhutan, Penn Dorji, governor of Phodrang and with the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, and Sherap Tenzin, governor of Trashigang and member of the National Assembly. The governors were particularly interested in learning about grassroots democracy and the role of nonprofit organizations in the political process.

Madhu and Executive Vice President Lynn Cohen met with Diego Sueiras, president of "Fundacion Nueva Generacion Argentina" (New Argentine Generation Foundation). Mr. Sueiras and the League representatives had an informative and lively discussion about the role of women in politics. Argentina has a law requiring that women make up 30 percent of the political parties' representatives in the lower house of parliament.

Madhu and Lynn also met with Adalberto Fulgencio Dos Santos, Junior, regional coordinator of Funasa National Health Foundation, Paraiba, Brazil. Mr. Santos is very active in the Worker's Party in his home state of Paraiba. Women's issues, especially domestic violence, were high on his list of items discussed.

Our most recent visitor was Dr. Jamal Nasir, a deputy commissioner in Swabi in northwest Pakistan. Dr. Nasir wanted to learn about the participation of women in American government and society and how to encourage more women to get involved in the political process in his home province.

Nver Sargsyan arranged to talk with LWVM because he has worked with the League of Women Voters of Armenia. In Armenia he works with the International Executive Service Corp, which is implementing a Nonprofit Strengthening Program. He was in the Boston area on a State Department-funded program that brings professionals from abroad for experience and ideas exchange. Mr. Sargsyan was interested in learning how a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization like the League influences public policy.

"The one thing that impressed all our visitors," Madhu said, "was that the League accomplishes so much as an all-volunteer organization that receives no governmental funding. We had to carefully

explain what being a nonpartisan, multi-issue grassroots organization means; similar groups don't seem to exist in most of these countries."

## Summer Interns Provide Support to LWVM Projects

By Joanna Corrado Daniel  
LWVM VP Communications

The LWVM is pleased to announce that we have two interns to help us with our endeavors this summer. As you can see below, both women are well suited to the tasks at hand and we're fortunate to have them on board. Erika Davis and Jessica Urban are working on a variety of assignments including the Vote! 2004 Campaign, especially the Voters Guide to be published in *The Boston Globe*, DNet, the League's online voters guide, presentations of voting information, promoting the League's Vote! 2004 website [www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info) and more.

**Erika Davis** grew up in Newton and will be a senior at Goucher College, a small liberal arts school in Baltimore, Maryland. She studies Political Science and Women Studies and is very much at home interning with the League of Women Voters. Erika would like to go on to study law and work through the legal system to affect change. She also enjoys working with non-profit organizations.

Erika interned with the National Organization for Women last summer. She saw first hand how an interest group operates and realized the potential impact of their work on legislation. This summer she chose to intern with the League because she recognized the compelling effect it has on the public. Erika is eager to be part of an organization that has a large impact on public policy, serves the voting public and is run mostly by women.

She is pleased to be working on the Voters Guide, which is used by all voters. "I find it satisfying to know that I can work within the political sector and not have to label myself as a member of a specific party. I really look forward to the summer with the League. I have only been here for a

couple of weeks and I already feel like I have an important role."

**Jessica Urban**, from Holliston, MA, just completed her sophomore year at Wellesley College, where she is double majoring in Political Science and Spanish. Her varied interests have her involved in extensive extracurricular participation. Among her favorite activities is Mock Trial, with her team having placed 2nd at the National Tournament in Florida this past year, where she was voted an All-American Attorney. She is also captain of the Wellesley Club Soccer team, and will be President of the Wellesley College Glee Club this coming year. She is a Student Admissions Representative, which entails giving tours and acting as an overnight hostess to prospective students. She is also the secretary of El Concilio, the Spanish Majors' Council.

After interning in the Communications division at The Children's Defense Fund in Washington, D.C. last summer, Jessica decided to work closer to home this summer. Always intrigued by politics, public policy, and the law, she chose the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts so that she could learn more about the policies and positions of candidates in the upcoming elections and share what she learned with others.

Jessica plans to attend law school after Wellesley, and then hopes to work as a practicing attorney specializing in international human rights law. Working as a judge, or possibly entering politics are other enticing goals for the distant future. For this summer, she is happy to focus on assisting the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts in the busy pre-election months and absorbing as much information about the upcoming elections as she can.



Summer Interns Erika Davis and Jessica Urban

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

## Massachusetts League Winner of National Voter Award



Vote Award- The Honorable Lucy Wilson Benson, former LWVUS President and Undersecretary of State and Honorary Chair of the Vote! 2004 Campaign. (center) admires the newly received Voter award with LWVM Citizen Education VP, Carol Reimers (left) and LWVM President Madhu Sridhar (right).

By *Alix Driscoll*  
LWVM Director

“We did it!”, exclaimed Madhu Sridhar, beaming with pride as she accepted the VOTER Award in Washington, DC on June 14th. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts received the prestigious and much sought after 2004 Voter Award from the League of Women Voters of United States at the organization’s 46th national convention. This honor is bestowed on one of the organization’s almost 900 local and state affiliates for effectively and creatively enhancing voter participation.

“The League of Women Voters has worked for more than 84 years to encourage all members of our communities to exercise their right to vote,” said LWVUS President Kay Maxwell. “The efforts of the LWV of Massachusetts carry on that tradition and add to our vibrancy as an organization.”

The LWV Massachusetts established an advisory committee of prominent public figures with The Honorable Lucy Wilson Benson as the honorary chair to help the VOTE! 2004 Campaign flourish and reach many different constituencies. Led by the State Board, League members across the Commonwealth launched **VOTE! 2004 Campaign**, an old-fashioned political style campaign to increase voter participation, citizen awareness and non-partisan education about the political process in Massachusetts in this crucial election year.

The distinguishing features of the Massachusetts **Vote! 2004 Campaign** strategy plan used innovative new tools for voter education that includes creating a new website – [www.votinginfo.info](http://www.votinginfo.info) and the development of Massachusetts Voters’ Bill of Rights. In



Voter Award – LWVM President Madhu Sridhar and LWVM Executive Director Risa Nyman accepting the Voter Award from Rosie Stephens, Director LWVUS Board and Outreach Chair.

addition, the Massachusetts League drew from its traditional strengths honed across eight decades, with the publication of the revised brochures on voting incorporating changes due to Help America Vote Act and the Voters Guide published in the *Boston Globe*.

“The LWVUS received many excellent applications for consideration in each of the categories”, said Rosie Stephens, LWVUS Outreach chair. She commended all the Leagues for their outstanding and innovative programs and said, “Winning entries demonstrated a strong emphasis on increasing the

impact, visibility and organizational development of the League, in addition to meeting the goals of the specific program.”

An independent panel of judges who selected the winning entries included Sarah Clusen Buecher, Activism Manager, Working Assets; David B. Rottman, Principal Court Research Consultant, National Center for State Courts; and Tobi Walker, Program Officer, The Pew Charitable Trusts.

## Voting Systems Study in Full Swing

By *Bernadette Buck*  
Chair, Voting Systems Study

Leagues all over the state are learning more about the surprising effects of voting systems in our democracy by holding workshops based on the materials developed by the Voting Systems Study committee. There are two informative workshops now available – the first on voting systems for single offices such as mayor, governor, attorney general; and the second on voting systems for legislative bodies such as school committees or the state legislature. The two workshops highlight how the voting systems used can influence, among other things, the style of campaigns, the number of political parties involved, the percentage of women and minorities elected, and the competitiveness of elections.

Leagues participating in the study will follow up these two workshops with a consensus meeting where League members will engage in one of the fundamental processes of the League – coming to consensus on the issues. The consensus questions and consensus meeting guide are currently being developed by the Voting Systems Study Committee and are expected to be available in early fall. The deadline for consensus reports to be back to the Voting Systems Study Committee will be in February 2005.

If your League is not participating in the study but you are interested in the topic, you may still be able to participate in the study online. A process to do this is currently being developed; watch for details in the VOTER, or if interested, contact Bernadette Buck, study chair, at [bbuck@lwvma.org](mailto:bbuck@lwvma.org).

## LWVM Program & Action

(continued from page 3)

### Reproductive Rights

#### Specialist: Elizabeth Dunn

- An **Act to Provide Timely Access to Emergency Contraception, S546/H2438**, was reported favorably out of the Healthcare Committee to Senate Ways and Means.
- The **Woman’s Right to Know Bill, S1069/H2644**, was given a study order by the Judiciary Committee.
- The Federal Drug Administration recently refused to authorize **Emergency Contraceptives** for over-the-counter use, which had been recommended by the FDA Advisory Board. ACTION: Write or call the White House (1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500; 202-456-1111; fax 202-456-2461; [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)) protesting this FDA decision.

# League Introduces Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights

(Continued from Front Page)



*The Honorable Lucy Wilson Benson discussing the importance of the Voters Bill of Rights and praising the League for crafting it.*

*The Honorable William Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth, LWVM President Madhu Sridhar and The Honorable Lucy Wilson Benson, former LWVUS President and Undersecretary of State and Honorary Chair of the Vote! 2004 Campaign, display the newly signed Voters' Bill of Rights with future voters Danielle, Lauren and John Jeffery, children of the LWVM Program and Action VP, Diane Jeffery.*



## *The League of Women Voters and the Secretary of the Commonwealth Unveiled a Landmark Voters' Bill of Rights to Ensure that Massachusetts Voters are Aware of their Rights at the Polls.*

(continued from front page)

- on the voters' list – this delivers the message that every voter is valued in this democracy; and
- The right to a replacement ballot if an error is made while marking a ballot – this guarantees that the voter can cast a ballot that will count and will reflect the voter's choice.

At the signing, League President Madhu Sridhar stated, "The strength of a democracy is measured, in large part, by the full and valued participation of its citizens. We are pleased to join as a partner with Secretary Galvin in this effort to make voters aware of their rights at the polls. At this time when Massachusetts is absorbed in upcoming partisan politics, we are casting light on the central player in our democracy – the voter."

Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin said, "I congratulate the Massachusetts League of Women Voters for their initiative in producing this Voters' Bill of Rights for the polling places of the Commonwealth. Media reports of voting problems from other states can produce confusion at times, and voters may not be aware of their rights until they need one, so this concise list of all their rights will help ensure that everyone who is qualified to vote and wants to vote is able to do so."

The League undertook this project as part of their comprehensive Vote! 2004 Campaign to educate voters about the new changes in voting procedures. Whether it is new identification requirements, provisional balloting, or the complaint process to address grievances, the League believes that all voters have a "right to know."

The signing of the Voters' Bill of Rights on June 16 came just two days before the 131st anniversary of Susan B. Anthony being fined \$100 for trying to vote in the 1872 presidential election, when it was illegal for a woman's vote to be counted. Madhu Sridhar noted, "It is clear that the problems preventing universal suffrage over a century ago still have not been resolved. It is the hope of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts that this Voters' Bill of Rights will advance the citizens knowledge regarding their right to vote and help to make a more effective and active electorate."

September 18, 2004

**Save the Date!!**

**Fall  
Conference**

**Our Choices, Our Future – Vote 2004!**

Quincy Marriott Hotel