

# League of Women Voters of Massachusetts League Leaders Update

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

LWVMA CALENDAR



**March 25, 2009 - LWVMA Board Meeting - 133 Portland Street, Boston**

**April 5, 2009 - Essay Contest Awards Ceremony - Faneuil Hall, Boston**

**May 29/30, 2009 - Convention 2009 - Newton Marriott, Newton**

Visit our website at [www.lwvma.org](http://www.lwvma.org) for more information.

## CITIZEN EDUCATION

### **Essay Contest - Awards Ceremony - Sunday, April 5 - Faneuil Hall**

The 10th Annual Essay Contest deadline for submission has passed and 1400 students have submitted their essays on the topic "Democracy and Change: The Newly Elected President." Over 40 League members are busy reading and scoring the final submissions this week. Whether or not you volunteered as a judge, please plan to attend the awards ceremony on Sunday, April 5 from 2-4 PM at historic Faneuil Hall in Boston. This event is always inspiring as students read their winning essays from the stage that has hosted so many great speakers in our history. This year we are thrilled to be hosting Dr. Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools.

**Volunteers are needed on April 5 at the Faneuil Hall ceremony**, please contact Kim Jerdon at [kjerdon@lwvma.org](mailto:kjerdon@lwvma.org), if you want to help. We need about 10 volunteers to ensure the event runs smoothly for the winners and their families.

Complete information about the contest and awards event are at [www.lwvma.org](http://www.lwvma.org).

### **Spring Candidates Forums**

Spring town election season has begun. Most local Leagues will be holding candidate forums over the next few months. As you are organizing these key League events, remember that it is best practice to have a moderator from outside the town. This ensures that there is no conflict of interest for the moderator and that there is no question that your League is sticking to the non-partisan policy. *Please note that the moderator grant program has been temporarily suspended.*

For assistance in finding a moderator, contact [Kim Jerdon](#) at the LWVMA office for names of LWV moderators in your area.

## MEMBERSHIP AND TRAINING

### **LWVMA Convention: May 29 & 30, 2009 - Boston Marriott Newton**

Please mark your calendar for the 2009 LWVMA Convention. The theme this year is "Health Care Rx: Challenges and Solutions for our State and Nation". Confirmed speakers include Former State Representative, Patricia Walrath and Health Policy Expert, Nancy Turnbull; invitations have been extended to others.

State Convention is where we conduct the business of the League and vote in a new Board of Directors and President for the next biennium. This year [delegates](#) will also vote on some proposed amendments to our LWVMA By-laws.

More information will be included in later League Leader Updates and on the LWVMA website, [www.lwvma.org](http://www.lwvma.org).

### **Dyna-Member Award for Convention 2009**

Does your League have a newer member who stands out from the crowd? Someone who has truly made a difference in your League? Then this dynamic, relative newcomer in your midst is a Dyna-Member, and LWVMA's Membership and Training Committee wants to know all about your League's good fortune!

The Dyna-Member Award will be presented to selected nominees and their local Leagues at the LWVMA Convention Awards Luncheon on Saturday, May 30, 2009. Nominations are due by Friday, May 1, 2009 to Wendy Manz at [wmanz@lwvma.org](mailto:wmanz@lwvma.org).

### **Lotte E. Sharfman Award for Convention 2009 - Deadline- April 29, 2009**

The Lotte E. Sharfman Award will be presented to three local Leagues at Convention 2009 in May. Nominated Leagues will have conducted creative and innovative Citizen Education or Voter Service activities during 2007 - 2009.

Please describe your Citizen Education or Voter Service activities and attach supporting materials, such as bulletin or local newspaper articles and photos, voters guides, Know Your Town booklets or websites, flyers, forum programs etc.

Activities may include: working with diverse communities; candidates and issues forums; voters guides; student and senior programs; cable, radio and tv programs; get-out-the-vote efforts; warrant meetings; publications; and workshops.

The Awards will be divided by League size:

25 members or fewer

26-74 members

75 members and up

Submit your information by April 29, 2009 to: (email or post)

LWVMA  
133 Portland Street  
Boston, MA 02114

Attention: Shawna Reid, [sreid@lwwma.org](mailto:sreid@lwwma.org)  
Phone: (617) 523-2999

### **Bulletin Awards at Convention 2009 - Send to Pat Facey by April 24**

Bulletins are an important source of information for busy League members who have less time to attend meetings and take part in units. Bulletins require a huge commitment of time and effort by local Bulletin Editors and organizers. This award is in recognition of their work.

Awards will be given in each of the following categories:

- Leagues with 50 or fewer members
- Leagues with 51 to 100 members
- Leagues with more than 100 members

1. Submit the your best Bulletin for the past year - May 2008 through April 2009.
2. Deadline for Bulletin Award is April 24, 2009
3. Email submissions to **Pat Facey - Bulletins** at [lwwma@lwwma.org](mailto:lwwma@lwwma.org) or
4. Mail submissions by U.S. Post to:

Bulletin Contest, LWVMA, 133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114

Delegates at the Convention will be the final judges on Friday, May 29. Winners will be announced during the Awards Luncheon on Saturday, May 30.

Award certificates will be mailed to the winning Leagues' Presidents after Convention.

## **PROGRAM AND ACTION**

### **Day on the Hill 2009**

#### **Aiming for Transparency: Restoring the Public's Trust**

The LWVMA Day on the Hill brought about 140 League members, students and others to Beacon Hill for an excellent panel discussion, updates from our specialists and lobbying our legislators. Cape Ann LWV member and Effective Government Specialist June Michaels moderated the panel discussion.

#### **Judith Meredith, Executive Director of The Public Policy Institute**

[\[http://realclout.org\]](http://realclout.org) and author of "Lobbying on a Shoestring," the book on lobbying, started the discussion by pointing out that elected and appointed officials make different decisions when they are being watched by those affected. Her other main point is that lobbying is merely getting the right information to the right people at the right time.

**Norfolk District Attorney William Keating** [\[http://www.mass.gov/da/norfolk/\]](http://www.mass.gov/da/norfolk/) spoke next on the obstacles to transparency on Beacon Hill. Mr. Keating has also served in both houses of the Massachusetts legislature. Keating noted that the system was designed not to work efficiently with the system of checks and balances aimed at curbing any branch's power. He advised that to overcome obstacles to getting a bill passed, find out what

interests could have objections, find out what they are and try to address them early in the process. Even what may seem to be a simple, noncontroversial bill may have opposition that can bring its forces to bear throughout the legislative process.

**Janet Domenitz, Executive Director of MassPIRG, [<http://www.masspirg.org/>]**

discussed how regulations are set and the importance of staying involved throughout that process. Once legislation is signed into law, the agency identified in the bill is responsible to draft regulations to enforce the law. There is a period of public comment that may or may not include hearings. It is similar to the legislative process but lower profile, and lobbyists show up for regulation writing as much as they do for legislation writing. Domenitz had some words of advice that apply equally to legislation or regulation writing: 90% is showing up; stuff isn't complicated, it's mostly common sense and right and wrong; it's up to you to make the process more public and transparent; finally - be persistent.

**Pam Wilmot, Executive Director of Common Cause, [<http://www.commoncause.org/>]**

focused on making government accountable. She repeated what the previous speakers had already noted and that all Leaguers know - the government is the people's government. Most of the protections and transparency measures such as the open meeting law and freedom of information act were created in the 1970's and have not been updated since. While there are some problem areas including that the Massachusetts legislature does not hold itself accountable to the open meeting law and that newspapers are less involved in Freedom of Information prosecutions than they used to be, there is reason for some optimism with President Obama and Governor Patrick raising the bar by things such as their use of websites for reporting on the stimulus package. She closed with the famous aphorism by Justice Brandeis that sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Following Q&A with the panelists, LWVMA specialists reviewed bills that the League is focusing on this session. [Click here](#) to see the information on all the bills covered by specialists Clare Gordon, Basic Human Needs; June Michaels, Effective Government; Lynn Wolbarst, Environment and Natural Resources; Betsy Dunn, Equal Rights & Reproductive Rights; Judy Deutsch, Health Care; Patti Muldoon, Justice; and Louise Haldeman, Legalized Casino Gambling.