



The Massachusetts Voter

April 2008
v. 83, no. 3

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF MASSACHUSETTS

Day on the Hill 2008

Balancing Economics, Energy and the Environment

■ By Carole Pelchat
LWVMA VP Program and Action

With the theme of Balancing Economics, Energy and the Environment, the 2008 Day on the Hill provided an enthusiastic and engaged audience of League members and guests with an opportunity to discuss current legislation and lobby their legislators for League-supported bills.

Representative Dan Bosley of North Adams, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies, stepped in as introductory speaker when Speaker of the House Salvatore DiMasi was unable to attend.

Representative Bosley provided an interesting and entertaining review of his experiences from the previous day when his Committee had a marathon session hearing testimony on the Governor's Casino Gambling bill.

He reported he was particularly impressed with the positive attitude demonstrated by President Diane Jeffery and other League members, in spite of their testimony being held until after 10:45 p.m.



Rather than create an environment dominated by casino gambling, Representative Bosley said he felt Massachusetts should continue to build on its world-wide reputation.
(Continued on page 8)

Inside

➔ President's Message	2
➔ Election Day Registration	3
➔ Day on the Hill photo gallery	4 & 5
➔ Online Essay Contest Winners!	6 & 7
➔ LWVMA Council 2008 Registration	12

Casino Proposal Defeated in the House

League successful in opposing Governor's plan

■ By Kelly Marcimo
Executive Director

Casino gambling was soundly defeated in a house vote that sent Governor Patrick's long debated proposal for three resort style casinos to a study committee by a greater than 2 to 1 margin. Following months of opposition efforts, the League is pleased with the outcome. The

League's position to oppose casino gambling was adopted in 1982. Additional confirmation came from many independent sources as this proposal was vetted.

Work continued last summer with a daily effort to deliver research information to the Governor. Through the month of
(Continued on page 9)

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
133 Portland Street
Boston, MA 02114

Pre-Sort First Class
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 54162
Boston, MA

SAVE THE DATE
LWVMA Council 2008
"Engaging Democracy"
Newton Marriott
Saturday, May 17th



President's Message

Diane L. Jeffery

Engaging Democracy

"Engaging Democracy" is the theme of this year's Council on **May 17, 2008** at the Newton Marriott Hotel. Engaging in our democracy is essential if we are to maintain a healthy democracy in our communities, state and nation.

The League is an organization that stands for integrity, good government and engaging citizens in the political and electoral process. Our members are involved and concerned citizens.

Many serve or have served as local government officials, as Representatives and Senators at the State House including the first woman President of the Massachusetts Senate, Therese Murray, and as members of Congress and other positions at the federal level.

The League of Women Voters is truly an organization that grows leaders, and we start with a commitment to the next generation through projects that reach out to young people.

It is important for all League members to be involved in that process. Inviting a friend or neighbor to a forum, offering a ride to an event, and talking to others about how the League has helped to shape your individual growth and development, and has served to reinforce

all our efforts to strengthen our democracy. Mentoring new League members is essential in that process.

I hope many of you had the opportunity to attend our Making Democracy Work Awards Ceremony on **April 13th**, when the winners of the Online Student Essay contest read their essays in historic Faneuil Hall. Hearing from future League members and leaders is an inspirational League event that is not to be missed!

Your community activism and volunteer spirits are essential in furthering our healthy democracy. I congratulate League members for their unique roles in their communities and commend you for the service that you perform in our Commonwealth!

I look forward to seeing you all at Council when we will hear from dynamic speakers and attend informative workshops on 'Engaging Democracy'. (Please see page 12 for registration information).



The Massachusetts Voter

A publication of the
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114
Phone: 617-523-2999 | Fax: 617-248-0881
Voter Information Phone: 800-882-1649
lwwma@lwwma.org
www.lwwma.org | www.votinginfo.info

LWV Board 2007-2009

Diane Jeffery, President
Carole Pelchat, Vice President
Betsy Cregger, Treasurer
Stefani Traina Goldshein, Secretary

Martha Colamaria, Director
Pat Costello, Director
Kathleen Keohane, Director
Natalie Monroe, Director
Mona Schwartz, Director
Rhondda Tewes, Director

Executive Director
Kelly Marcimo

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF MASSACHUSETTS

**Join us and make a
lifetime of difference!**

Visit: www.lwwma.org
or call: 617-523-2999

**Engaging Democracy
since 1920.**



Join the League today!
www.lwwma.org / www.votinginfo.info

April 2008
2

EMPOWERING VOTERS PROJECT Election Day Registration Released from Committee

■ By Kelly Marcimo
Executive Director

The Election Day Registration bill Senate No. 446, House No. 646 was approved by the Joint Committee on Election Law on February 21, 2008. If passed, the bill would allow state residents to register and vote on Election Day this November.

This legislation is supported by the League and is part of the Empowering Voters Project as a priority item.

LWVMA Vice President of Program and Action Carole Pelchat, detailed our support recently at Day on the Hill. "Since the beginning of our nation we have taken successive actions to eliminate land ownership, language skills, gender, and race as barriers to register and vote, at times only after long and dangerous battles. Each battle won required additional efforts from our local officials, and each time these expansions of suffrage have been absorbed," she explained.

In response to a *Boston Globe* article that stated voters needed EDR because they are lazy, Carole responded "I am always surprised, as a woman and a member of the League of Women Voters, when efforts to lower barriers to voting are contested. We have the experience of nine states to create an effective implementation process. Voting is a right, not a privilege. We must continue to make voting as easy and accessible as possible."

"Election Day Voter Registration in Massachusetts," authored for Demos by election policy experts R. Michael Alvarez from the California Institute of Technology and Jonathon Nagler of New York University, finds that with EDR Massachusetts could expect a boost in turnout, with particularly large increases for some demographic groups.

"Our report shows that adoption of EDR could raise turnout in Massachusetts, overall, about 5 percent," said Nagler. "In particular, EDR can have a positive affect on turnout rates of young voters, those who've recently moved, naturalized citizens, and people of color."

Alvarez added, "One clear conclusion of voter turnout studies conducted over the last 35 years is that states that make registration and the voting process easier will increase participation among eligible voters. EDR is a clear example of that trend."

Key findings from the report:

- Nationally, in 2004, EDR states had a voter turnout rate of 70.3 percent, versus 54.7 percent in states without EDR.
- If Massachusetts had EDR, indicators point to a likely boost in turnout of around 5 percent.
- Turnout among those between the ages of 18 to 25 could increase by 9.7 percent.
- Turnout for those who have moved in the last six months could increase by 7.9 percent.
- Turnout for minorities could increase by 5.6 percent under EDR.

ACTION ALERT

Please contact your legislators today to let them know that you support this bill and would like to see it voted on and passed this session. For further details on the League's talking points and bill information, please go to the Issues and Action section of www.lwvma.org.

Election Law Intern assists with research

Jen Clark is the League's Legislative Intern for the spring of 2008. Jen is a 2004 graduate of Tufts University, where she majored in Spanish and English and minored in Political Science. This coming fall she will be returning to school to pursue a JD and a Master of Public Policy.

When not interning at the League, Jen works as a litigation paralegal at the Boston law firm of Prince, Lobel, Glovsky & Tye. She also does volunteer work with various Tufts University alumni organizations.

Since starting with the League in January, Jen has focused her research on Massachusetts election law and pending legislation regarding election reform.

We greatly appreciate the work Jen is doing for our organization. We will continue to enjoy her presence and efforts in the office until June, and wish her the very best in her studies when she departs for the summer and is off to her graduate program in the fall.

HELP WANTED!

FIELD SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

Here's your opportunity to play an important role in the Massachusetts local League network!

Field Service Reps are catalysts for cooperation among regional Leagues, key players in the development of local League leaders, and conduits of communication between the local and state levels of the League. Participation does not require many meetings, but does involve staying in regular communication with Leagues in the Region that you are assigned. You don't have to live in the Region.

**To volunteer, please contact
Pat Costello, Field Service Coordinator
pcostello@lwvma.org**





LWVMA President Diane Jeffery gives opening remarks

Day on the League members fill Gardner



Arlington students listen intently to the speakers



Chairman Bosley discusses economic development plans for the Commonwealth



An Andover High School student asks a question



LWVMA President Diane Jeffery presents Senator Resor a citation for her years of service in the Senate



Join the League today!
www.lwvma.org / www.votinginfo.info

April 2008

the Hill 2008 Members and guests Auditorium



Andover High School student poses a question

Photos by Davidson
Photography



Senator Pam Resor points to her support and pride of membership



League members respond to remarks with questions of their own



LWV Andover/N.Andover members and students



LWVMA VP Carole Pelchat (center) with League specialists define League positions on current legislation



Join the League today!
www.lwvma.org / www.votinginfo.info

9th Annual Online Making Democracy

Generously Sp



Grade 4-5

1st Place - Ryan Sweeney

People need to see that the President is courageous and honest so that they trust he will do the best for the country. If the President did not have these qualities, teenagers in the United States could get into trouble as they get older. They could join gangs, use graffiti and do other vandalism. Without a President with courage and honesty, who would the young kids look up to?

2nd Place - Noah Christian Gould

Leadership is vital to lead a country, and necessary to make good decisions. When Abraham Lincoln was President he wanted to end slavery in America. At first it wasn't popular with many, but with strong conviction and leadership he kept persevering. I think this is how a President should act; standing up for what is right even when others disagree.

3rd Place - Catherine Dalton

To look like a nice President you have to have clean clothes for work. Also it gives a nice impression for the people of the United States of America. The leader of the United States should be a good listener. Also it will be great to understand things. Next, to be a caring President makes a good impression. The leader of United States has to be organized.

Grades 6-8

1st Place - Aziz Rangwala

It is important for the people of the United States to make an informed choice and to vote. Every race, religion, and gender should vote because each opinion counts! Rutherford Hayes, the nineteenth president of the United States won the election for presidency by one vote. One person CAN make a difference! The crisis in Iraq is yet another example of why we need to vote. The Iraqis weren't allowed to vote, and the world has witnessed their sad plight. Voting is a GREAT privilege and an honor!

Grades 6-8 cont.

2nd Place - Erin Broderick

The decisions our president makes could be killing millions of people. It is important to vote in the election for President of the United States, because he or she will make decisions about issues like world hunger and the environment that affect the entire world. If nothing is done about these problems, they will continue killing people. These issues impact everyone's life, and they will not go away until something is done about them. If you do not vote, the wrong decision could be made and the president could do things that make life much worse.

3rd Place - Shauna Sullivan

The new president will not directly affect me but will affect the people around me, as well as my future. First, we hope that they will not cut programs for people with special needs like my brother. My uncle is in the war helping to rebuild the towns and cities that were destroyed, and if the new leader pulls troops and workers out of the Middle East, then my uncle can come back home and spend time with his family. Additionally, the new president will help stimulate the economy. He or she will help stop global warming and start conserving energy in the United States.



Student Essay Contest by Work: VOTE 2008

sponsored by



Grades 9-12

1st Place - Chris Yee-Paulson

In Presidential politics, the voter must look past engineered imagery and evaluate the source of reported information to make his or her own judgment. In this current political climate, multiple layers of "spin" cover the true and credible information. To reach the core, the voter must peel away unnecessary layers of political image and distraction. Presidential politics in this information age is exceptionally challenging for the voter.

2nd Place - Lauren Blake

One of the greatest achievements of the technology age, the Internet, changes how people communicate. It allows anyone to type his or her opinions on a blog, thereby increasing the number of people participating in the democratic process. Voters should be aware that anyone can write anything, and that many sites are virtually uncensored. Rumors on credible-looking websites can prove especially detrimental, as they distract voters from the issues.

3rd Place - Thalia Blanco

We already ask ourselves questions with the goal of revealing whether certain people are trustworthy or not. But when it comes to political people how do we know? How can we, the people, possibly ask questions about someone who is so far out of reach? We jump on the couch, find a

Grades 9-12 cont

comfortable spot, and turn on the TV to CNN or Fox News or any other channel related to politics. Yet, still, we do not completely know what is real because who is to say what is the truth and what is the lie. Don't think about personal information told by the News channels, or talk shows, etc. because that is where the lie creeps and hides.

18-24 Year Old Division Winner

Meghan Patroliia

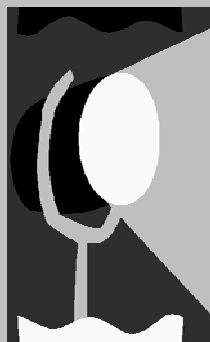
Information is crucial to the concept of democracy. Every time someone learns a little bit more about the affairs of the country, and is motivated to influence take part, the system is working that much better. Presidential campaigns are long and expensive, but we have a lot of people, a lot of space to cover, and fiercely defended ideals of equality and freedom of speech. It takes time and money to reach as many of our citizens as possible so they can make the best informed decision they can. Limiting resources which will be used to this end can only compromise the integrity of the ideas on which this country was founded.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Citizen Education Fund's 9th Annual Online Student Essay Contest was a great success, thanks to the young people who wrote essays, their teachers and parents who advised and encouraged them, the League members who judged the essays, and to our sponsor, **Stop & Shop**, who makes this wonderful project possible.

It is always difficult to choose the winners from among so many creative and thoughtful essays. This year was no exception. The quality of the essays was outstanding, and the League also awarded Honorable Mention certificates to 51 students.



Spotlight on Local Leagues



The **Acton Area** League Second Annual Speaker Series on contemporary issues drew many non league members to the audience. Topics included immigration, challenges to democracy and green chemistry.

The **Andover/N. Andover** League brought students to Day on the Hill and facilitated two student to volunteer to serve as interns for the casino gambling effort and hosted a successful casino gambling forum.

The **Amherst** League coordinated the VOTE 2008 press conference kick off for the Western part of the State and also hosted a successful casino gambling forum.

*(Continued from page 1)
Day on the Hill 2008*

tion as a center for medical and technological research, education and culture, all of which would be jeopardized by the introduction of casinos.

The second speaker on the program was Senator Pamela Resor, who reviewed several pieces of legislation proposed to improve the environment and save energy. LWVM President Diane Jeffery presented Senator Resor, who will be retiring at the end of her current term, with a certificate honoring her long years of service to the League and in the Legislature.

Before heading off to lobby with their individual legislators, the attendees heard the LWVMA Specialists (Patti Muldoon, Administration of Justice; Judy Deutsch, Health Care; Louise Haldeman, Casino Gambling; Betsy Dunn, Equal Rights/ Reproductive Rights; Clare Gordon, Basic Human Needs; and Mary Frantz, Education) and Vice President of Program and Action, Carole Pelchat, present valuable information about a number of bills currently being supported or opposed by the League. All members are encouraged to visit the Issues and Action section on www.lwvma.org to assist in these legislative efforts.



Your League support is in the bag!

Order your tote bag today! \$20.
Call: 617 523-2999

Remembering Florence Rubin

Long time activist and League member Florence Rubin passed away recently; we honor her memory as we recall her role as a Massachusetts League Leader. Her years of service to the League include her leadership as:

President, LWV Newton 1967-69
Treasurer, LWVMA 1969-71
President, LWVMA 1973-77
Board Member, LWVUS 1977-84

For more than half a century, Florence Rubin found ways to make a difference. In addition to serving four years as president of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, she chaired the state Commission on Judicial Conduct, and led organizations that urged citizen participation in the court and school systems.

At 83, her health had been failing and she had been preparing to move from Newton to Seattle to be close to her youngest grandchildren when she died. "I could never see how one person could really believe they were accomplishing something and making things different," said her husband, Lawrence. "But she always believed that and behaved that way."

A celebration of her life will be held at the Massachusetts State House, Beacon Hill, Boston on Thursday May 15 from 1:00 to 2:30 P/M.

Please contact the League office at 617 523-2999 if you would like more information, or would like to attend but need assistance with transportation. Please inform others you may know who might like to attend.



Join the League today!
www.lwvma.org / www.votinginfo.info

April 2008
8

*(Continued from page 1)
Casino proposal defeated*

August, individual League volunteers delivered 27 different packets of information to the Executive Office at the State House.

When the governor filed his legislation, the League began efforts to educate legislators and the public about the negative impacts that the passage of class III gambling would bring to the Commonwealth. We worked closely with the newly formed coalition, CasinoFreeMass, which included the Massachusetts Council of Churches, Massachusetts Family Institute, casinofacts.org, National Association of Social Workers Massachusetts chapter and many individuals who opposed casino gambling.

Public forums hosted jointly with the coalition and local Leagues from across the Commonwealth were taped and distributed to local public access stations. LWVM President Jeffery spoke on several radio and television programs and even debated Secretary Dan O'Connell at the Cambridge Democratic Town Committee meeting with fellow League member Leo Maley.

The League provided Legislators with current information on casino impacts from independent sources. Meetings were held with Speaker of the House Sal DiMasi, Chairmen Bosley, Senate President Therese Murray's legislative staff and many other legislators to offer the League's perspective and to share our research.

The League distributed the Exaggeration Free News, a newsletter produced by the coalition that focused on casino research and information, both electronically and in hard copy form to the Legislature and the news media.

The League was represented at many forums across the Commonwealth by President Diane Jeffery, Casino Gambling Specialist Louise Haldeman and League member Elaine Bono who was a resident in Ledyard, CT, when Casinos were introduced there.

Following a local forum in Andover, featuring Senator Sue Tucker, two students from Andover High School requested internships for service learning credit to work on the casino issue.

Our early invitation to Speaker DiMasi to be our guest speaker for Day on the Hill turned out to be very timely. As the day approached, and the public hearing on the casino legislation was announced, we realized we would be perfectly poised to lobby our legislators on the day after the public testimony was delivered.

League members spent the entire day waiting to give testimony before the Economic Development and Emerging Technologies committee on Tuesday. President Jeffery, Specialist Haldeman, Executive Director Marcimo, and League members Elaine Bono, Leo Maley and Jeanne McKnight observed many hours of testimony.

Elaine testified in the early evening relating to her first hand experience of how her community in Ledyard was forever changed by the introduction of casino gambling. Leo Maley testified with the coalition group and President Jeffery and Executive Director, Marcimo closed out the hearing with the League's testimony at 10:46 p.m.

We were back at the State House early the next morning feeling like we had never left. Day on the Hill continued the conversation on the casino issue with Chairman Bosley filling in for Speaker DiMasi as our keynote speaker. League members, students and our invited guests CasinoFreeMass coalition members were further

energized to fight this proposal. The State House was buzzing with anticipation of the committee vote that was to be released that day. Following the informative presentations, we were off to meet with legislators with a renewed sense of purpose, and by all accounts we were very successful.

The committee vote, and unfavorable finding of "ought not to pass" by a vote of 10-8 with one abstention, was released shortly after 4:00 p.m. Executive Director Marcimo and members of the coalition Laura Everett, Massachusetts Council of Churches and Evelyn Reilly, Massachusetts Family Institute were working up to the last minute and observed the announcements, ending a long day of work at the State House.

Thursday brought the end of the casino debate on the hill with a full house vote 108-46 on the measure sending the legislation to a study committee where it will stay until the end of the session.

The issue of slot machines at the racetracks is likely to be considered in the coming months. A Senate proposal to place a question on casino gambling as a non binding referendum on the ballot in November has been discussed.

The League must continue to oppose any expansion of gambling that could pave the way for casinos in the Commonwealth. Slots at the race track will open the door for tribal casinos to sue for the right to class III gambling on reservations based on federal case law.

The heavily funded casino lobby will not stop their efforts to sell this idea to Legislators and to the public with marketing that overstates the benefits without mentioning the negative impacts of their industry. We must remain diligent in our efforts to continue to educate legislators and the public to oppose casino gambling in Massachusetts.



Join the League today!
www.lwvma.org / www.votinginfo.info

Fond fairwell's and happy hello's Changing of the Guard in the League office

Senior Director Risa Nyman's last official business before retiring was the Making Democracy Work award ceremony on April 13. She bid farewell during the ceremony of a program she conceived and developed, just one of the many valuable and important achievements that hallmark her years of service to the League.



Risa has long been an active LWV member, starting with the Brookline LWV organizing salads for a pot-luck meeting. If you haven't heard this story, not only is it humorous, it is instructive because an experienced League member took it upon herself to make sure that this new member had a connection and a purpose within the organization. Look where it lead . . .

Retiring LWVMA Senior Director Risa Nyman

Risa served as President of LWV of Brookline from 1979-83; on the LWVM Board of Directors for ten years including four years (1989-93) as President. LWVUS tapped Risa to chair the budget committee from 1994-96 and then to serve on the Board of Directors from 1996-98. During that time she also chaired the Diversity Implementation Task Force and served on the Diversity Committee that helped bring the LWV increased awareness on the importance of diversity in membership recruitment, issues discussions and the League's public image. The committee developed the LWV Diversity Tool Kit that is still a valuable resource.

Jo-Ann Berry has joined the LWVM office as the Senior Director. Jo-Ann first joined the League in Dedham and then moved to Acton and has been involved in the Acton Area LWV since 1993. The first day's mail in Acton brought an invitation to the local program planning meeting. Look where that lead . . . Jo-Ann has served on the Acton Area LWV Board / Steering Committee most of that time except during her term on School Committee from 2000-2006, including as President from 1996-99 and co-chair of the steering committee from 2006-2008. She served on the LWVM Board of Directors from 2003-2008, including on the Citizen Education Committee and Diversity Advisory Committee.

Kimberly Jerdon joined the staff in March as the Administrative Assistant. Kim brings to the League a vast background in both

political and business knowledge. She graduated from Bentley College in 2004 with a Bachelors degree in Management. She attended the Women in Politics and Public Policy graduate certificate Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston to pursue her graduate degree in public policy. She also interned as a lobbying assistant with Charles Group Associates. While there she was responsible for the creation of a political action committee and the planning of their first Lobby Day at the State House. Kim also worked as a deputy campaign manager for Marjorie Decker for her successful reelection bid to the Cambridge City Council.

Wine Tasting Event A Success

■ By Jo-Ann Berry
Senior Director

Amid the quickly changing weather of swirling snow and sunshine, members of many local Leagues and their guests gathered to support the League in a fun and tasty way. Past LWVM President Nancy Carapezza hosted a congenial gathering for a wine and food tasting on Sunday, February 11. The wine and food pairings were selected by Mark Jeffery and were chosen to demonstrate a range of aromas, textures and taste sensations.

Lively conversation and excellent food and wine kept the winter chill at bay. Enid Theurmer of the Hamilton-Boxford-Wenham League won the door prize of a Rehoboam bottle of wine – if you're not sure what that is, the bottle was almost as large as the recipient! Look for similar events in the future to support the League in a fun social setting.



LWVMA Past Presidents Nancy Carapezza and Susan Shaer with current President Diane Jeffery



Join the League today!
www.lwvma.org / www.votinginfo.info

April
10

League Study Highlights Local Budget Concerns

■ By Kathleen E. Leonardson
Co-Chair, Fiscal Policy Update Committee

"Budget gaps have been a chronic problem for cities and towns over the past several years due largely to unavoidable growth in health care and utility and fuel costs and to slowing growth in local revenues and municipal aid payments from the state." –Mass Municipal Association, 2008

As part of the Massachusetts LWV study of municipal finances, local Leagues took the fiscal pulse in their home communities last year. The studies included interviews of local officials and the analysis of data from sources including the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and Department of Education.

Several Leagues specifically noted budget gaps in their communities. A structural deficit was reported in both Amherst and Norwood. Westford also noted a gap between revenues and expenditures. Virtually all communities noted extreme pressure on local budgets.

In response, many Leagues reported outside fundraising and volunteers taking on more responsibilities. In Braintree, local PTO's raise about \$150,000 per year. In Marblehead, PTOs have purchased computer equipment, rugs and library shelving for schools. In Carlisle "Much of town work is done through volunteers including an on-call Fire Department that serves the community of 5,300." "The town of Arlington has been lowering services, relying on volunteers and donations..."

Many surveyed communities have sought to increase revenues by increasing fees. For example:

- "In Amherst fees have been increased in athletics, inspections, leisure services and adult education."
- In Needham " Fees have been increasing- sports fee as high as \$285 per

student sport; school bus fee \$375 per year for 7-12 grades and K-6 further than 1.5 miles from school."
Braintree instituted a trash fee.

Echoing other major studies, the League studies cited increases in the cost of fuel, municipal employee health insurance and pensions, and unfunded and partially funded state mandates, particularly SPED, as major contributors to the financial squeeze, along with insufficient state aid. Marblehead noted the cost of a local Charter School as a significant recurrent budget issue.

The fiscal pressure manifests differently in communities as prioritization decisions are made by local leaders;

- The Walpole League reports "It seems to be the common thread running through various departments that they are being asked to do more with less money and fewer people..."

In Westford, "While the population of Westford has increased, a new fire station is unstaffed... Westford has continuously deferred Capital costs and used its reserves in order to accommodate the demand for services."

Many communities have sought to increase local revenue through overrides of Proposition 2 ½. In Massachusetts last year, 38% of the attempts to increase property taxes were successful, according to the MMA. Override fatigue and a slumping economy may make passing overrides this year even more difficult.

According to the *Boston Globe*, as of mid- March, communities north of Boston considering increasing the tax rate through overrides include Newburyport, Rockport, Ipswich, Boxford, and Manchester. Gloucester, despite a \$2.4 million gap in funds, will not seek an override.

The Lexington League reported "While Lexington has supported a high level of service for many years; it is not clear how many overrides will be supported."

Belmont will need an operational override in 2008. Because property tax is the main revenue source for cities and towns, Boston and Amherst with large portions of tax exempt property (53% and 28.3% respectively) have the additional burden of negotiating agreements for payment in lieu of taxes.

Concern about the affect of budget pressures on the quality of life in our home communities was summed up in reports from three towns:

- In Needham "There is a concern for sustainability - can Needham continue to improve services within the budget while planning long-term and keeping the town in a sound financial position?"
- "Shrewsbury citizens are frustrated with the increase in municipal costs, the fact that local government does not have the tools to raise local receipts and to maintain the quality of life."
- For the town of Carlisle "Careful planning and tight budget control will not be enough- the town is entering into very difficult financial times and choices may be made that significantly impact the town as we know it today."

Twenty Massachusetts communities were studied by Leagues examining municipal finance using the Fiscal Policy Update (FPU) Committee's materials as a guide. Leagues that participated in the local study included: Arlington, Amherst, Belmont, Boston, Braintree Area, Concord-Carlisle, Falmouth, Harvard, Hingham, Lexington, Marblehead, Needham, Norwood, Shrewsbury, Westwood-Walpole, Waltham, Watertown, Westford, and Williamstown.



