



President's Message

Diane L. Jeffery

Since taking over the helm of the Massachusetts League, I am continually impressed with the good works that League members from across the Commonwealth produce.

The Leagues in the 5th Congressional District coordinated to organize several primary and general election forums with the candidates vying for the seat vacated by Marty Meehan. All were very professional League worthy events.

The newly forming Haverhill League sponsored a well publicized and well attended Mayoral debate in their city. I would personally like to commend all who helped to put these together.

There are countless other undertakings by local Leagues that are too numerous to mention in this column. Check out the Spotlight on Local Leagues section in this Voter for highlights of local League activity. As I mentioned in my previous column, the League of Women Voters is who we are, due to the accomplishments of local Leagues.

There is much going on at the state level as well. The October Fall Conference was a great success thanks to the coordinated effort of the Fiscal Policy Study Update Committee. I received many positive comments from League members on the quality of the speakers, overall program and venue for the event.

The Fiscal Policy Study Update Committee is also nearing the consensus phase and has produced an impressive amount of information to assist local Leagues. The Affordable Housing Study Update Committee has also done a wonderful job, conducting informational forums in many different locations to assist local Leagues in reaching consensus on this very important topic area.

At this writing, the state League is gearing up to officially launch our Vote

2008 Campaign, which will provide comprehensive nonpartisan voting and election information to Massachusetts voters in an effort to increase voter participation, awareness, and education this presidential election year.

The newly updated Votinginfo.info website is a wealth of information. (Read more about the monthly Campaign themes and innovative initiatives elsewhere in this Voter.)

The Membership and Training Committee debuted a new Membership Brochure and is also planning a Super Saturday state League sponsored training day on February 2nd. All local Leagues are invited.

We are trying-out a new fun and social event on Sunday, February 10th when we are holding a wine tasting and food pairing at the beautiful, home of past LWVM President, Nancy Carapezza. Whether you join us for the networking with other Leaguers, the wine, the food, or just to view Nancy's lovely home, we hope to see you there!

Our Program & Action Committee has been busy lobbying on behalf of many of the bills in the Legislature. Same day voter registration, health care initiatives, environmental and human welfare concerns have topped the list, in addition to fighting against the very real threat of class 3 casino gambling coming into Massachusetts. (Please view lwwma@lwwma.org under issues and action to find out more details).

Also, plan on attending our annual lobby day, "Day on the Hill" on March 19th and invite the youth and others in your community to attend as well.

The On-line Student Essay Contest is currently in full swing. If you have never attended the yearly awards ceremony at Faneuil Hall, it is an inspirational



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

event, not to be missed, so mark your calendars now for the Making Democracy Work awards event on Sunday, April 13th. Hearing the winners read their essays is always a treat.

Two very important dates to remember and alert others of are that **January 16th** is the last day for citizens to register to vote for the Massachusetts Presidential Primary which was just recently moved up to **February 5th**. It should be a busy and fruitful 2008 for the League.

I invite everyone to contact me and start off the New Year by joining us in helping to make democracy work here in Massachusetts!



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

January 2008



Stop & Shop Partners with LWVM in 9th Annual Online Student Essay Contest



■ by Risa Nyman
Senior Director

Once again, the League of Women Voters Citizen Education Fund is pleased to announce that Stop & Shop will sponsor the Online Student Essay Contest, now in its ninth year, and the Making Democracy Work Awards event.

For 88 years, the League of Women Voters has been providing services to encourage people to be informed and active participants in government and elections.

The theme of this year's essay contest is Vote 2008. The questions deal with what is uppermost in everyone's mind right now - the presidential election.

Engaging students in grades 4-12 to think, discuss and write about issues related to

elections, voting, and the qualities of a president is critical to insure a healthy democracy into the future.

With support from Stop & Shop, the League is able to expand the contest this year to include 18-24 year olds. Reaching out to young voters to educate them about voting and to encourage their participation in the election is a hallmark of the League's Vote 2008 Campaign (*see page 1*).

By participating in the essay contest, young voters can reflect on the positive and negative aspects of the presidential election process, including such issues as the length of presidential campaigns, the amount of money spent on campaigns, and the positives and negatives of the primary system.

There will be one winner in the 18-24 year old category who will receive a \$1,000 cash prize.

All judging for the essay contest is done through email, and we welcome League members to become judges. Most of our judges participate each year and love to be part of this project. **If you are interested in being a judge, email the League office at lwvma@lwvma.org.**

All the winners will read their essays from the historic podium in Faneuil Hall on Sunday, April 13, 2008, from 2:00 – 4:00 P.M. at the Awards event. This is a truly special event that inspires all of us about the future of our democracy. The Boston Children's Chorus, a wonderful group of children whose enthusiasm and voices uplift the audience will perform. The public is invited. **SAVE THE DATE!**

Affordable Housing: Study phase and consensus complete Position development begins

■ by Jane Nash
Co-Chair Affordable Housing Study Committee

The Affordable Housing Committee has finished its work. The Committee started two years ago studying the Massachusetts affordable housing laws including some programs. Many reports were written and are available on the League website.

Nine district consensus meetings were held starting in the western part of the state and ending in Braintree at which a Power Point presentation gave the final pieces of information.



The committee worked hard to give the membership the information it needed to come to consensus on a very complicated subject. Lynn Cohen, LWV Westford was invaluable to us as a mentor and editor.

The Committee embarked on an entirely untried method of holding consensus meetings. Despite all the traveling and extra work for the Committee, we agree that this method was successful as members from various leagues were able to share their information and concerns.

Now all the consensus reports will be reviewed by a reading group and from this consensus the LWVM board will develop a position.

The A.H. Committee: *Jane Nash and Wendy Manz, Co-Chairs, Joan Duff, Claire Gordon, Roberta Leviton, Mardi McKenna, Muriel Zaginailoff, and Lynn Cohen, Advisor*, extend their thanks to all those who helped make this experiment work, including the Field Service Region Representatives and League members who helped organize local meetings.

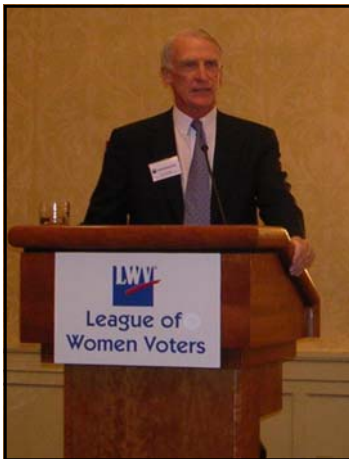
Special thanks to all the excellent moderators and recorders who made the individual meetings work smoothly. Finally, we would like to thank the League Board and staff for all of their wonderful cooperation. We could not have completed our work without their support.



Municipal Finance the topic at Fall Conference League Members gather on Fiscal Policy

■ by Kelly Marcimo
Executive Director
and Kathleen Leonardson
Co-Chair Fiscal Policy Update Committee

Fall Conference, held at the Quincy Marriott, entitled "Who Pays for Local Government - Why is it that my property taxes continue to go up while funding local services is a struggle?" was a great success!



John Hamill

The conference keynote speaker was Mr. John Hamill, Chairman of the Municipal Finance Task Force and Chairman and CEO of Sovereign Bank, he was followed by a panel discussion featuring Leslie Kirwan, Secretary of the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, Geoffrey Beckwith, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) Thomas Scott, Executive Director of the Massachusetts School Superintendents Association and Mayor John Barrett III of North Adams.

Many Massachusetts communities are experiencing fiscal pressures, as witnessed by increasing fees and property taxes at the same time police and firemen are being laid off, libraries and municipal offices are reducing hours and schools are closing.

The League formed a state wide Fiscal Policy Update Committee (FPU) two years ago

to study municipal finance. The committee gathered information on local finances, offered two forums on municipal finance in January, designed a study for local Leagues to take the fiscal pulse of their own communities, and helped plan the October conference.

Led by Co-chairs Zaxaro Bennett and Kathleen E. Leonardson, LWV Marblehead, the committee is working on study materials that may lead to the adoption of a new League position on municipal finance.

LWVM President, Diane Jeffery, opened the conference and stated "the League is committed to a reasoned approach to solving the fiscal situation in cities and towns across the Commonwealth."

League members from across the state enjoyed a full-bodied discussion of municipal financing that started with keynote remarks from Mr. Hamill. His perspective on the long-term fiscal situation of Massachusetts's cities and towns was a crucial backdrop for the panel discussion, along with his synthesis of the findings of multiple recent studies.

LWVM Fiscal Policy Update Study Committee Co-Chair Kathleen E. Leonardson commented, "Oftentimes, such discussions become a litany of how bad the situation has become, but Mr. Hamill was able to move the discussion beyond that to a diverse set of solutions, several of which had been already put in motion."

Studies have shown that especially in the global economy, what attracts businesses to Massachusetts is the quality of services at the local town level. Yet, communities in Massachusetts are falling behind in infrastructure maintenance and services due to funding issues.

- The average yearly residential property tax bill for families increased \$910 between 2000 and 2005
- In 1987, public works spending was 15% of municipal budgets; in 2004, it had dropped to 9%.
- 4 of 5 dollars in increased property taxes on existing properties allowable under Prop 2 ½ have gone to municipal employee health insurance costs, which are crowding out other expenditures.

Mr. Hamill said there is no single silver bullet to fix municipal funding problems. Instead there are an array of adjustments that could be made including sufficient and predictable local aid from the state and diversification of local revenue sources. In addition, municipalities need help on the cost side of government, especially with health insurance. Localities may also need to consider consolidation or regionalization of service delivery to deal with costs.

Secretary Kirwan reflected the state's point

(Continued on page 12)



Secretary Kirwan, Geoffrey Beckwith, Thomas Scott, Mayor Barrett and John Hamill



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January 2008

LWVM supports coalition to oppose Casino Gambling

■ by Kelly Marcimo
Executive Director

For the past several months, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has been active in the growing movement to defeat the expansion of gambling in our state (see page 7). President Diane Jeffery was a featured speaker at the press conference announcing the formation of a citizens group CasinoFREEMass.



LWVM President Diane Jeffery at press conference

League member Elaine Bono of Yarmouth, MA, spoke at the first regional meeting of the group in New Bedford on November 12. The group is seeking public support in opposing casino gambling in Massachusetts.

Ms. Bono was a southeastern CT resident for 30 years, living in Ledyard for 27 of those years. She experienced first-hand the transformation of Ledyard from a small New England town to the host of the world's largest casino, Foxwoods.

She served on the Ledyard Planning Commission from 1985 to 2001, during the time that Foxwoods was built and grew in Ledyard and forever changed the landscape of the town. Her knowledge of what casinos can do to a community is invaluable to Massachusetts citizens as we consider Governor Patrick's proposal to bring casinos to the Commonwealth.

Ms. Bono detailed for the audience of concerned citizens her experiences with increased traffic and unsafe driving conditions due to drunk drivers and speeders. As Foxwoods grew, Ledyard developed the fifth highest crime rate in the state, with first-time experiences with or increases in robbery, murder, drugs, prostitution, loan sharking, drunk driving, and embezzlement.

Ledyard's own tax collector embezzled over \$300K from the town to play slots and eventually lost it all. The small town of Ledyard (pop. 15,000), where people used to leave their home doors unlocked, was never the same again."

Increased costs for the local government of Ledyard were cited, along with problems handling and enforcing local zoning and planning regulations. This necessitated additional expenses for the town attorney and town hall employee time.

There became a need for more town hall employees, plus the need for more work for the regional planning agency. These

needs were in addition to the increased load on local and state police and the court system.

Ms. Bono also witnessed a decline in local business. Casinos have their own malls, gas stations, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, movies, arcades, and other entertainment.

Local business owners did not gain from the casino traffic. Instead, the resulting effect was a decrease in attendance at local tourist attractions like Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium, the Nautilus Submarine and at local events.

The regional Chamber of Commerce and the entire economic development of southeastern CT became casino-oriented. The local towns lost their old New England charm.

The end result for Ms. Bono and her family was to leave Connecticut in 2005 to escape the casino culture that has taken over the part of CT she once loved. Her relocation to southeastern Massachusetts as a haven from casinos is now in jeopardy, as it is for all citizens of the Commonwealth.

As a supporter of the coalition Casino FREE Mass, LWVM encourages concerned citizens to become involved in this movement. For more information, visit www.lwvma.org.



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January 2008



Phonothon 2007



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January 2008

Thanks to the businesses that helped make Phonothon a success
by donating prizes and phone banks.

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Curves in Newton
DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park
Harvard University Art Museums
Henrietta's Table - Charles Hotel
ICA-Institute of Contemporary Art
Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum
JFK Library and Museum
Michele Topor's North End Market Tours
MIT Museum
Museum of Science
New England Aquarium
Sports Museum of New England

2007 Phonothon Locations

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Plymouth : **Steve Triffletti**
Prudential, Town & Country Real Estate
Wellesley : **Sandra Avellone**
Century 21 Commonwealth Real Estate
Westwood : **Barbara Shea McDonald**

LWVM announces third edition *Directory of Civic Engagement & Leadership Development Programs for Massachusetts Youth.*

■ by Risa Nyman
Senior Director

The League is pleased to announce the publication of the third edition of the unique *Directory of Civic Engagement & Leadership Development Programs for Massachusetts Youth*. No other resource in Massachusetts exists that lists, under one cover, programs for introducing young people to a diverse array of civic education opportunities.

"Each year, the League reviews and updates the listings in the Directory to insure that they are correct and current. New programs are added that meet the criteria for inclusion in the Directory," according to LWVM President Diane Jeffery.

The League is pleased to distribute the *Directory of Civic Engagement & Leadership Development Programs for Massachusetts Youth* to every school and library in the Commonwealth and also encourage

them to link to this resource on their websites.

Civic engagement is at the core of our communities' health, and all communities must continue to foster young people's interest and involvement in civic life. The League of Women Voters is proud to have the support of leaders who believe that the next generation has the tools they need to become informed voters and leaders in our communities, state, and nation.

"Civic education is part of the core fundamentals and goals of our education system," said Senator Robert A. Antonioni (D-Leominster). "As Senate Chairman of the Joint Committee on Education, I believe that educating our children about civic involvement empowers a stronger and more effective society."

Representative Patricia A. Haddad (D-Somerset), Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Education, said, "Good citizens are

informed citizens and civics education should be an integral component of every child's educational upbringing".

Robert Maier, Director of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, stated, "Public libraries are centers of civic engagement in every community in the Commonwealth. I encourage individuals and organizations planning activities that encourage youth to be engaged with their communities to partner with their local libraries."

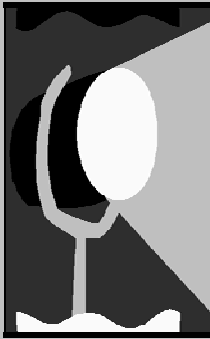
The Directory of Civic Engagement & Leadership Development Programs for Massachusetts Youth will make it easier for the Massachusetts youth to find program of interest and to help cultivate civic responsibility in them.

Call the league office 617 523-2999 for additional copies and visit our website www.lwvma.org to link to the online Youth Directory!



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January 2008



Spotlight on Local Leagues

The **Marblehead and Wellesley** Leagues co-sponsored a forum "Computerized Voting Machines: Who is counting your vote?" featuring Dr. Barbara Simons, a recognized expert on security issues in voting systems.

The **Amherst** League presented "The Future of Immigration Reform in the United States" as part of their efforts for the National Immigration Study, featuring Paula Brooks a member of the American Immigration Lawyers' Association.

The **Worcester Area** League held a "Climate Change Primer" with Ann Kelly, an environmental attorney and Director, Governance for Ceres.

Check Local League websites for more information

(Continued from page 1)

League Launches VOTE 2008 Campaign

san, comprehensive election website - www.votinginfo.info. First developed in 2004, this website is continuously updated and enhanced to provide the answers to questions about voting procedures, the election process, voter registration, absentee voting, etc.

The website also offers electronic greeting cards to send to friends and relatives with a personal message and a reminder and information about registering to vote. The website also includes a free electronic subscription service so people can receive automatic email reminders with important election related information, dates, and deadlines, throughout the year.

As a new feature of the *Vote 2008 Campaign* this year the League will provide voters with a special Online Voters Guide for candidates for U.S. Senate, U.S. Representative, State Senator, and State Representative. In the Online Voters Guide, each candidate will list his or her top issues, biographical information, position papers, and endorsements. The Online Voters Guide is funded in memory of two dedicated League activists, Sieglinde Martin of North Andover and her mother Dorothy Schramm of Iowa.

The *Vote 2008 Campaign* is on the continuum of innovative services of the League of Women Voters for voter education and voter outreach.



Congressional Race Unites District Leagues

■ by Jo-Ann Berry
LWVMA Director

When Representative Martin Meehan announced his resignation from Congress in the spring of 2007, he triggered a summer-long race for the vacant seat. He also unleashed a remarkable collaborative effort by the eight Leagues of Women Voters in the Fifth Congressional District.

Five intense months of work by representatives from the Acton Area, Andover/North Andover, Chelmsford, Concord-Carlisle, Harvard, Haverhill, Sudbury and Westford Leagues produced two pre-primary debates in August, the only pre-primary debates to include all candidates, as well as two debates in September before the general election. Not to mention a generous amount of publicity for the League.

The committee members also involved their individual Leagues to publicize the forums in their towns and adjoining towns without Leagues. All League members in the district were asked to submit questions for the candidates, and were encouraged to volunteer at the actual events. It was a great collaborative effort!

The Fifth District Leagues had a great experience putting together all of these Congressional candidate's forums and strongly encourage other such regional collaboration when the opportunity arises. Multiple Leagues carry multiple clout. The talk at our closing meeting was how to translate this experience to the next governor's race.



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January 2008
8

NEW CITIZEN PROJECT Students and Senior Volunteers Unite in Citizen Education project

■ by Kelly Marcimo
Executive Director

The New Citizen Project is providing service learning and volunteer opportunities for high school students and senior citizen volunteers.



Katie Duvall, Melissa Turnblom, Kara Mac, and Taylor Lincoln

Students from Shrewsbury High School Service Learning Program have been coming to the League office to help pre-

pare Citizen Education packets for the Naturalization ceremonies held at Faneuil Hall. Working with two senior citizen volunteers from RSVP (retired senior volunteer project), they prepare over 400 packets for the twice-monthly ceremonies.

After preparing the packets the students go to Faneuil Hall and placed them on the seats in the Great Hall along with a letter from The President of the United States and a small American Flag that the Department of Immigration provides.

The students then go off and tour the Faneuil Hall area, including a walk through the Holocaust Memorial before returning for the actual ceremony.

The students get to witness the moving ceremony, which includes remarks from the judge who officiates, the formal swearing in, and a child of one of the newly naturalized citizen leading everyone in reciting the

pledge of allegiance. Military soldiers who are being naturalized are recognized, there is usually at least one or two at each ceremony.



Newly naturalized citizen leaves Faneuil Hall with Citizen Ed packet

The Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Citizen Education Fund project has enabled the League to reach out to new citizens, high school students and retired senior volunteers in a very meaningful way.

League Exhibits at MA Conference for Women

The MA Conference for Women continues to grow as an excellent opportunity for networking with women and organizations who share the ideals and mission of the League. Our booth at the all day event was an active and interesting place to be!



Electronic Election 2008 Reminder Service

Sign-up today!

Sign up friends, family and students to receive timely Election 2008 reminders and nonpartisan information via email from the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Sign up at www.votinginfo.info



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January 2008

LWVM Wine Tasting Event

Sunday, February 10, 2008

4:00 p.m.

*Wine and food pairing
and tasting*

at the home of

LWVM Past President,

Nancy Carapezza in Wayland.

\$75 per person

R.S.V.P. to lwyvma@lwyvma.org

617 523-2999



*League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Citizen Education Fund
presents*

9th Annual Online Student Essay Contest
for Massachusetts grades 4-12 and 18-24 year olds



Go to www.lwvma.org for essay questions, rules & prize info
Contest Deadline is March 4, 2008

Save the Date: Essay Contest Awards Event
Sunday, April 13, 2008 | Faneuil Hall, Boston

Questions? Contact the League at
lwyvma@lwyvma.org or 617.523.2999

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Campaign Calendar

January 2008

Kick-off Press Conferences

February 2008

Election Selection: From Presidential Primaries to Election Day

March 2008

Massachusetts Students Speak Out About Candidates and Leadership

April 2008

Recruiting Young Poll Workers to Serve on the Frontline of Democracy

May 2008

Happy Graduation -
Give the Gift of Voter Registration

June 2008

Summer School -
Everything You Need to Know About Voting

July 2008

Beat the Bias:
How Nonpartisanship Fits Into Electoral Politics

August 2008

Crash Course:
Voters' Rights and Responsibilities

September 2008

Online Voters Guide: Your Ballot on the Web

October 2008

Watch the Debates – Analyze the Candidates and Their Positions

November 2008

Vote! It Is In Your Best Interest

December 2008

Celebration & Evaluation



(Continued from page 1)
Day on the Hill

ested in learning the most current perspectives from invited speakers Speaker of the House Sal Dimasi, State Senator Pam Resor, long-time League member and Senate Chair of the Committee on the environment, and economics and Barry Bluestone, the Director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy, and Dean of the School of Social Science, Urban Affairs, and Public Policy at Northeastern.

We will focus on how these critical issues facing the legislature at this time might impact the residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Day on the Hill is the League's way of harnessing the energy of our members to achieve the League's priority legislative goals. League specialists will present legislation the League is supporting for this session and give attendees talking points on these matters.

All League members and their guests are invited and encouraged to participate in Day on the Hill. There is no fee and no need to register in advance. There will be coffee at 9:00 a.m. in Nurses Hall at the State House; the program will begin at 10:00 a.m. in Gardner Auditorium.



Day on the Hill 2008

Balancing Economics, Energy and the Environment

**One
League
One
Voice
JOIN US**

(Continued from page 4)
Fall Conference

of view suggesting there is a structural funding problem at both the state and the local level, with the state relying on volatile revenue sources, yet responsible for providing services that escalate in economic downturns, e.g. social services. So far, the Governor's Municipal Partnership initiatives have given municipalities help with the costs of health insurance and pensions.

For most Massachusetts communities, at least half of the budget is spent on education. Thomas Scott discussed the multiple state mandates under which school departments' function. Special education has been an ongoing issue with respect to funding; particularly special education transportation, which was once funded by the state at 60% and now, receives zero funding. The gap between what schools are mandated to spend and what they are receiving is growing.

Geoff Beckwith said a broader discussion of the future of the Commonwealth is needed. "Place matters more than ever in the global economy" he said. Yet, between 2002 and 2006, 26% of state revenue went to localities, down from 37%.

The MMA has several proposals to alter the relationship between the state and municipalities, including a "40-10" plan whereby 40% of state revenue would be dedicated to local government and 10% of that would be required to go to non-school side of government, phased in over several years. He also stated that Charter School funding needed to be addressed.

Many Massachusetts communities are already using creative ways to finance expenditures. North Adams Mayor Barrett said his community has sold its property and cut timber on public lands to raise money.

Outside of the New England area, all states micromanage their localities less than Massachusetts. In addition, other parts of the country give localities more revenue options. Further reliance on property tax is not realistic, since property tax currently provides 52% of local revenues in Massachusetts.

It was suggested that a dialogue about these fiscal issues and the complexity of the solutions needs to include the public, elected officials at all levels as well as non-governmental groups. The economic future of Massachusetts may be in the balance.



Congressman John Tierney

Fall Conference luncheon speaker, Congressman John Tierney, Massachusetts Sixth Congressional District Representative, addressed the audience on energy policy and the positive impact energy conservation could have to offset spiraling costs faced by local communities. He encouraged the League to continue its work with environmental and energy issues.

Super Saturday !

February 2, 2008, Assumption College, Worcester, MA
Morning and Afternoon Workshops plus a Networking Lunch

Presented by the Membership and Training Committee

Morning workshops
Membership Initiative
Moderator Training part 1
Voter Service
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Afternoon workshops
Membership Initiative
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