



The Massachusetts Voter

September 2008
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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF MASSACHUSETTS

Fall Conference 2008: "Finding the Common Wealth"

■ by Carole Pelchat
VP Program and Action

Fall Conference this year is being held at the Crowne Plaza in Worcester on October 18. Our focus this year is to define the economic issues facing our state, identify our resources, and educate ourselves on the means to expand our impact in our local and state communities.

Lt. Governor Tim Murray, our luncheon speaker, was elected to the Worcester City Council in 1997, and beginning in 2001, he served as mayor of Massachusetts' second largest city for three terms. Under his leadership, Worcester experienced unprecedented progress, with \$1 billion of new economic development projects that are helping to transform an older industrial city into one that is well-positioned to

lead and grow in the new economy. Lt. Governor Murray, among his many responsibilities, currently chairs the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness, which is leading a 5-year plan to end homelessness in the Commonwealth by 2013.

Workshops are scheduled for morning, and afternoon. Of current interest is the discussion on Question 1, the initiative to repeal the state income tax. Training workshops include effective League lobbying, Consensus discussion leader and recorder training, and moderator training.

"Finding the Common Wealth" is a conference for League members. Guests are welcome, and

the public is invited to consider these significant issues. (See page 12 for registration information).



Lt. Governor Tim Murray

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Victory After 26 Years!!! Gender Equality in Annuities Bill

■ by Betsy Dunn
Equal Rights Specialist

The LWVMA applauds Senate President Therese Murray, Representative Ruth Balser, and Governor Patrick for their stand on gender equality.

In 1976, the Massachusetts voters

ratified the Equal Rights Amendment to our state's Constitution. The LWVMA was part of the coalition that achieved that victory and which then went on to see that all Massachusetts General Law (MGL) complied with the stipulation that "Equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex,

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

Important League Events!

Fall Conference 2008
October 18, 2008

Day on the Hill
March 4, 2009

Guardian of Democracy
March 12, 2009



President's Message

Diane L. Jeffery

Election 2008

At this writing, our Vote 2008 Campaign is in full swing. The Massachusetts League is utilizing the Smart Voter software to maintain a comprehensive online Voters Guide for candidate information. We also have continuous nonpartisan voter information on our votinginfo.info web site. We have prepared fact sheets on the ballot initiative questions that will be on the ballot in November and are finalizing a packet of information on Question 1, (which if passed would repeal the Massachusetts state income tax), for local Leagues to use in educating the public on this potentially disastrous initiative. Local Leagues are encouraged to contact the state League office to obtain this ready-to-use forum informational packet.

There is excitement in the air this presidential election season, when for the first time in over 75 years, voters will be asked to choose a candidate for president that is not an incumbent president or vice-president. With the proliferation of information about the candidates, organizations such as the League continue to play a vital role in getting nonpartisan, issue-focused information to the voters. Now, more than ever, it is necessary to get the message out that every vote counts.

Who we elect at our local, state and national level plays an important role in shaping the policies that affect all of our lives. With the assistance of Boston University Ad Lab, the League has developed public service announcements and posters that resonate the 'your vote counts' message. Please be

sure to download them for your League this election season.

I have officially begun my presidential Vote 2008 tour to local Leagues and colleges and universities across the Commonwealth. Many local Leagues have already contacted the state League office to reserve their date. Please be sure to reserve your spot on this timely presidential tour today. This is a valuable opportunity for all local Leagues to garner interest and grow membership by highlighting the valuable work that is done by your local League and the Massachusetts League.

We have an exciting Fall Conference coming up on October 18th, featuring keynote luncheon speaker Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray. The theme is "Finding the Common Wealth." There are interesting speakers and workshops scheduled on the day, so please be sure to complete the registration form on the back cover of this issue and secure your reservation(s) today.

Who we elect as our representatives is important to the health of our democracy. Our participation in our democracy is key to having a healthy democracy. I encourage you all to let your voices be heard, continue your good work in getting information out to the voters and grow your Leagues this important election season.



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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.

LWVMA New Executive Director Joins Staff

Shawna Reid joined the LWVMA staff this July as the new Executive Director. Shawna is from the Concord-Carlisle League and brings a mix of broadcast, League Board and political activist experience to the office. She benefited from Kelly Marcimo's organized and skilled guidance in her first weeks on the job. Kelly will continue as President of the Shrewsbury League and as a LWVMA Membership and Training Committee member.



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September 2008

LWVUS NATIONAL CONVENTION 2008 Sparks a Democratic Discussion

■ by Maria Morelli
LWV Boston, Convention 2008 Delegate

A recent member of the Boston League, I was attracted to the League's accomplishments as a nonpartisan, civic-advocacy organization. Its mission to provide balanced information to members on a variety of public policies is sorely needed at a time when polarizing partisan rhetoric can obscure the essential facts about already complex issues like immigration and health care. I was especially eager to become a better educated citizen through League-sponsored forums that provide the chance for debate and consensus-building.

In no time, I would see the League practice what it preached: Along with Mary Tamer, President of the League's Boston chapter, I was asked to be a delegate at the National Convention, which took place this past June in Portland, Oregon. The Convention would be an opportunity for delegates across the country to lobby their positions at caucuses and to debate and vote at the plenary sessions on topics that would shape the League's business and programming.

Although this was my first Convention, I was determined to be a participant and not a merely spectator. Veteran League members impressed upon me the importance of attending Convention and using my voice. Staffers at Convention warned us not to lose our YES and NO voting cards and to sit in the areas designated for delegates, lest we lose our opportunity to vote---and be represented at Convention. I had even selected the reading materials for my flight to Portland with my upcoming participation at Convention in mind: Howard Fineman's book, *The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates*

That Define and Inspire Our Country. I was immersed in Chapter Four, free speech as an argument, when my flight took off.

What I was not entirely prepared for, and what both humbled and impressed me most about attending the plenary sessions and caucuses, was how often I would change my position on a topic, even after what I thought was careful analysis of the issues beforehand. Sure, I went into some sessions undecided, but it was those occasions when I was so sure of my decisions only to revise them after the Pro-and-Con speeches that really surprised me. No one wants to be labeled a waffler, so I'll describe my experience with this analogy: Hearing different views and consequently refining my thinking was much like assuming an aerial perspective after having been on the ground. Instead of seeing what was merely in front of me, I now had the fuller, more complete picture. And I was not the exception: League members may be effective advocates and debaters, but we are just as willing to incorporate other perspectives into our decisions.

My experience at Convention gave me this to think about: What we may value most about the right to free speech is the opportunity to express our opinions without fear of punishment, but since Convention I've been reflecting on another benefit as well---the contrast of opinions that can serve to sharpen our own thinking and redefine our sometimes narrow-view assumptions.

Beyond being an exercise in the art of persuading others, debates prompt us to question our own assumptions and, on a larger scale, they serve as checks and balances, especially of those who repre-

sent us in office. For all the hardnosed, partisan politics we observe, the fact remains that citizens who are exposed to different views are apt to change their minds-and their votes. It is the process of questioning ourselves and one another that sustains democracy. The hard-earned right to free speech would be diminished if we did not provide-and participate in-forums that encourage a contrast of opinions.

The democratic process itself is messy because we value free speech, but the failure to argue is much worse than the complications that debates can raise. As Fineman states in his book, "The American way breeds unsettling conflict, but argument is what leads to consent, and consent is what leads to legitimacy. People accept outcomes that they deplore, because they think the process gives their point of view a chance."

Do voters argue enough?

Attending Convention recharged my interest in the democratic process, especially how citizen participation sustains the process. The League is one of the few organizations committed to teaching civic involvement and how this involvement can indeed shape public policy. As a member of an organization that promotes access to balanced information and active debate, I've been emboldened to stir the pot myself. I pose a question for the National League to consider at our next convention: Isn't it time for the League of Women Voters to resume sponsoring presidential debates to provide the kind of forum that voters deserve? I can't think of a sponsor more worthy than the League of Women Voters.



Council 2008 “Engaging Democracy”

■ by Kelly Marcimo
Membership and Training

Local League members attending this year’s annual meeting, Council 2008, enjoyed an informative and motivating day of discussion, remarks and workshops on “Engaging Democracy.” “Engaging Democracy” speaks to the League’s mission to assist citizens to engage in the electoral and political processes. One of our goals at Council was to show how League members can better contribute to their own futures and discover self-fulfillment through civic participation and working the League’s mission.

Our morning panel opened with remarks from Massachusetts State Representative Kay Khan of Newton. She welcomed the League and commended us for our efforts to champion civic engagement. The panel discussion featured Elizabeth Clay, Director of Grassroots Governance in the Office of Governor Deval L. Patrick. Ms. Clay told us “Grassroots Governance supports the Governor’s commitment to civic engagement by widening channels for citizen participation in policy-making and community problem-solving.” We were delighted to learn of a new statewide youth council, recently introduced by the administration and League members were invited to sponsor students and serve as advisors/mentors for the new initiative.

Louise Haldeman, LWVMA Specialist spoke to us about the importance of legislative advocacy on both the state and local level. She shared lessons learned from her many years experience as the Casino gambling specialist and a local league activist in her community. “Knowing that you don’t always win

every battle, does not mean you cannot win the war and that change evolves slowly because it should not be easy to change but rather purposeful and necessitating a certain amount of effort.” Louise graciously reminded us.

Cathy Dowd, LWV Needham shared with us the opportunity to engage young people with the Youth Civic Advocacy program. A program that directly engages students in the process of legislative advocacy for an issue that is important to the students. Cathy detailed the particulars of her successful implementation of the program in Needham. Students actually select their own issues, develop position papers, editorials and elevator speeches to actively use to advocate for their issue and have arranged lobby sessions with State Legislators. Members were able to learn more so they could bring this program to their own community through the Youth Civic Advocacy workshop that was presented later in the day.

Eva Valentine, President LWV Haverhill Member at Large Unit detailed her developing League’s successful work with the Youth Poll Workers Program, another League effort to engage young people in democracy. Following the adoption of a new state law, proposed by the League, to legally allow 16 and 17 year old students to become poll workers, the State League sponsored this program with a pass-through grant to local Leagues who actively assist students to be trained as poll workers in their community. Eva introduced us to Kalister Green-Byrd, Vice President, LWV of Haverhill who was the driving force behind their effort that has led to 35 students working at the polls. The effect has

been profound. The same students even coordinated their own voter registration drive!

The many opportunities we have as League members to impact others in our communities is remarkable. We hope the conversation begun in this discussion continues to motivate members to even greater achievements of Engaging Democracy in their own communities.

After conducting the business portion of the day in the plenary session, Congresswoman Niki Tsongas motivated everyone with her experiences in the political arena and her recounting of events that led her to seek public office. Sharing the insiders view of life as a Congresswoman certainly spoke to those in the audience who may have thought of one day running for office themselves. Congresswoman Tsongas gave us the key as to why being engaged is so important, when she said, “Whether it be issues as serious as National security or as simple as recognizing the importance of watermelon in a congressional vote, democracy is meaningful to all citizens.”

In the afternoon, members were treated to these interesting workshops; **Membership Initiative: Tools for Success.** Leaguer’s looking for ways to grow their membership roster found they could earn a PMP rebate if they achieve a 10% growth in their League! Presenting this exciting new program Marcia Hirshberg, Chair and Pam Holland of the Membership and Training committee, guided the group through the best practices for membership recruitment.

If you’re disappointed you missed out, it is not too late for local Leagues to have

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September 2008

Sustaining the Massachusetts Health Care System

■ by Judy Deutsch
Healthcare Specialist

The Governor recently signed into law Senator Therese Murray's cost-containment bill (S 2863), which contains many features that may help to bring down the cost of our health care system. Features supported by the LWVMA that passed were uniform billing and review of health insurer's loss ratio (the amount of premium dollars that are spent on administration, in contrast with the amount spent on health care) and banning gifts from pharmaceutical firms to physicians, which passed in a watered-down version by banning gifts worth more than \$50.

Whether or not Chapter 58, the omnibus health care plan passed by Governor Romney and touted throughout the country, will be sustainable is still a big question. The cost for this year and that projected for next year runs hundreds of millions of dollars more than originally budgeted. According to the Wall Street Journal, "Over the decade, the expected overruns float in as much as \$4 billion over budget."

Businesses with 10 or more employees that do not supply health insurance are mandated to pay \$295 per year per employee, and this community has refused to pay a larger penalty. However, the cost

for coverage for a family of four is estimated to be \$14,000.

More than 300,000 of the estimated 600,000 uninsured now are covered, and the uninsured can still get emergency care through the uncompensated-care pool, but the Connector Board (the authority charged with implementing Chapter 58) has recently estimated that 60,000 of the people who are supposed to buy their own insurance will get waivers because they cannot possibly pay for it. Co-pays and deductibles are so high that many people with Connector-approved insurance policies cannot afford to get the health care they need.

LWVMA Summer Intern Report.....

■ by Kimberly Cotter
LWVMA Intern

After working this summer at the state office for the League of Women Voters, I do not believe that my fellow intern, Lauren Blake, and I will view democracy in quite the same way. Our experience this summer has embodied the League's unofficial tagline, "Democracy is not a spectator sport." From our monthly trips to Faneuil Hall for naturalization ceremonies, to the impromptu trips to the State House, we have been actively engaging in the process of democracy.

Every other Thursday, Lauren and I, with the help of the office manager, Kim Jerdon, trekked over to Faneuil Hall to distribute packets encouraging newly naturalized citizens to vote. We were also given the chance to observe one of the ceremonies and got to see Governor Deval Patrick speak! Lauren and I also became quite intimate with the confusing

layout of the Massachusetts State House, as we distributed letters to our State Representatives. One of the more exciting trips included watching the Senate in progress from the viewing gallery. As a citizen we read in newspapers about laws that have been passed, but watching the actual process is quite humbling.

Lauren and I were also responsible for two other projects this summer. Revamping one of the League's Publications, the Youth Directory, became our first task. **The Youth Directory** is an index of youth leadership and civic engagement opportunities for young people in Massachusetts. We contacted new organizations that offer promising and exciting opportunities for youth and added them to the publication. In addition, we designed a new cover for the directory and reformatted it. Overall, we find it to be more user-friendly and more accessible!

One of the more relevant, and perhaps

pressing, projects of this summer was our work on the **Vote 2008 Campaign**. Since the upcoming election in November is readily encroaching, Lauren and I did a lot of work to prepare for the voting season. We researched the three ballot initiatives of greyhound racing, decriminalization of marijuana, and the elimination of income tax, while also creating fact sheets that our League president can distribute. Lauren and I definitely honed our research skills and became very acquainted with League policy, as we researched League positions dating back to the 1960s! Additionally, we worked on the online Voters Guide. Previously, the Boston Globe published a voters' guide, but now we will be using the online resource, **SmartVoter.org**. Lauren and I compiled a list of all the candidates and sent each a letter, urging them to take advantage of this free and wonderful resource.

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Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas addresses Council 2008



LWVConcord-Carlisle members Erin Pastuszewski, Susan Sekuler, and Lori Pazaris

Council Engaging D



Panelists Cathy Dowd, Elizabeth Clay, LWV
and Lou



Lora Goldenberg and Pam Holland show their appreciation



Council 2008 Workshop



2008 Democracy



LWVMA President Diane Jeffery, Eva Valentine,
and Rose Haldeman



Cathy Dowd and Eva Valentine

Photos by
Davidson Photography



Marilyn Peterson and Pat Clifford from the Acton Area League



Shop Leaders share a table



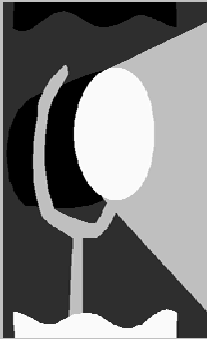
Peter Vickery and LWVAmherst member Leo Maley on blogging



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September 2008

Spotlight on Local Leagues



The **Norwood** League celebrates their 50th Anniversary with a festive float in the Norwood 4th of July parade. LWVMA President, Diane Jeffery and LWVMA Board member, Martha Colamaria anchor the float for their League.

The **Westwood/Walpole** League will be at the Walpole Stop and Shop registering voters on Saturdays, Oct. 4 and Oct. 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



Engaging Democracy *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5*

the M&T committee come to their area to present this workshop. Contact Field Service Representatives to schedule your Membership Recruitment training for a time that is convenient for your local committee.

For those who wanted to be the most effective at lobbying attended **Lobbying and Blogging 101** and got some great advice from LWV Amherst member Leo Maley. Expert blogger Ryan Adams shared his insights on blog development and participation as a means of engagement on political issues.

The **Media Access: Public Access Television and Print Media** workshop, designed to share methods to increase visibility for local Leagues featured Pat Costello of the Membership & Training committee who shared her many years experience and best practices for print media. While Maria Sheehan also from the M&T committee and General Manager of Westborough Cable Access gave direction on utilizing local cable programming.

LWV Needham member Cathy Dowd's workshop, **Youth Advocacy** was a lesson on the unique youth program being offered to High School students she had shared with us during the panel discussion. Members learned to deepen their League's relationship with local schools and public officials and build visibility in the community through civic education.

Senior Director Jo-Ann Berry presented the **VOTE 2008 Campaign** workshop, bringing attendees up to speed on ways to use the ongoing election season to increase voter participation, voter awareness, and our LWVMA voter education campaign.

The **Organizing Observer Corp** workshop featured experienced League leader MaryAnn Kenney, President, LWV of Norwood explaining best practices and why Observer Corp is a hallmark of the League.

The Council 2008 goal of engaging democracy was obviously met when at the end of the day many members volunteered to expand their role in the League and offered to join the LWVMA Citizen Education, Program and Action, and Membership and Training committees.



Save the Date Guardian of Democracy Award Dinner

Thursday, March 12, 2009
6:00 P.M.

Boston Marriott Copley Place

Honoring

Paul Guzzi

President & CEO
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

Former Secretary of the Commonwealth

For more information email Risa Nyman at
rnyman@lwwma.org



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September 2008

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 2007-2008 LWVMA Program and Action

■ by Carole Pelchat
VP Program and Action

Casino Gambling

House 4307 – An Act Establishing and Regulating Resort Casinos in the Commonwealth was introduced by Governor Patrick. The League lobbied against this bill. It was voted unfavorably out of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Technology and defeated on the floor of the House in 3/08.

Basic Human Needs

Senate 667 – An Act Restoring Health Benefits to Eligible Legal Immigrants was sponsored by Senator Montigny. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred favorably out of the Joint Committee on Children and Family Services, but was not reported out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee by the end of the legislative session.

House 3036 – An Act to Improve the Earned Income Credit for Working Families was sponsored by Rep. Marzilli. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Revenue and was discharged on a Study Order in 3/08.

Senate 67 - An Act to Let Child Support Come Home was introduced by Senator Candaras. The bill amended Dept. of Transitional Assistance guidelines regarding child support payments. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred favorably out of the Joint Committee on Children and Family Services, but was not reported out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee by the end of the legislative session.

Education

Senate 291 – An Act Relative to Fulfilling the Promise of Education Reform: Adequate Funding for Student Success was introduced by Senator Augustus. It

establishes an Education Resource Study Committee to conduct a study to determine the resources necessary to achieve education goals and regulates fiscal 2008 local and Chapter 70 aid to be distributed to individual cities and towns. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Education, where it was discharged on a Study Order in 3/08.

Senate 313 – An Act Simplifying and Making More Equitable the Provisions of Chapter 70 was introduced by Senator Fargo. It amends calculations of state aid for public schools and school funding. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Education, where it was discharged on a Study Order in 3/08.

Elections

Senate 440, 464, 638, 649, 650, 652, 680, 692, 695, and 709 – A series of bills intended to require voters to provide various forms of identification at the polls prior to being allowed to vote. The League lobbied against these proposals. They were referred to the Joint Committee on Election Laws, where it was discharged on a Study Order in 3/08

House 670 – An Act to Ensure Secure Voting Equipment was introduced by Rep. Kaufman. It required the use of paper ballots in all statewide elections. The League lobbied in favor of this proposal. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Election Laws, was reported favorably out of that Committee in 6/08 and continues to await action by the House.

Senate 2807 – An Act Relative to Election Day Registration was introduced by Sen. Creem and Rep. Fox in the House. The League lobbied in favor of this proposal. It was reported favorably by the Joint Committee on Election Laws and Senate Ways and Means, passed in the Senate and stalled in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Environment

House 2246 – An Act Requiring Environmentally Safe Alternatives to Harmful Cleaning Products was introduced by Rep. Smizik. The League lobbied in favor of this proposal. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Health, which reported favorably and referred it to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, where it was discharged on a Study Order in 5/08.

Senate 2481 – An Act Relative to Healthy Massachusetts: Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals was introduced by Senator Tolman. The League lobbied in favor of this proposal. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, where it went through a series of amendments. It was reported favorably and referred it to the Senate Ways and Means Committee and passed in the Senate. It was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, where it stalled at the end of the current session.

Equal Rights

Senate 2729 – An Act Relative to Equitable Coverage for Annuity Policies was introduced by Senate President Murray. The League lobbied in favor of this proposal. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Financial Services, where it was reported on favorably, passed in the Senate, passed in the House and was signed by the Governor in 7/08.



Legislative Update 2007-2008

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Health Care

Senate 593 – An Act Relative to Promoting the Efficient Use of Health Care Revenues was sponsored by Senator Jehlen. The bill established procedures to establish loss/care share ratios for health insurance providers. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Financial Services, where it was discharged on a Study Order in 4/08.

House 1137 – An Act to Establish the Massachusetts Health Care Trust (single payer health plan) was introduced by Rep. Hynes. The League lobbied in favor of this proposal. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, where it was discharged on a Study Order in 5/08.

House 2059 – An Act Relative to Patient Safety was introduced by Rep. Canavan. It established efforts to increase nursing students and ordered the Dept. of Health to establish and monitor nurse staffing levels in hospitals. The League lobbied in favor of this proposal. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Health, reported on favorably, referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, reported on favorably, referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means, passed favorably, and referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. The Senate passed a bill that was amended to allow staffing levels to be determined by the individual hospitals, which the League did not support. The bill was referred to conference, and the legislative session ended in a stalemate on this bill.

Senate 703 – An Act to Establish the Health Care Trust (the Single Payer bill) was introduced by Senator Tolman. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was incorporated into Senate 2526. The final Murray bill did not include single payer language. The House version (1137), introduced by Rep. Hynes was discharged on a Study Order by

the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing in 5/08.

Senate 2526 – An Act Relative to Promoting Cost Containment, Transparency, and Efficiency in the Delivery of Health Care was introduced by Senate President Murray. The League lobbied in favor of several provisions of this bill and was in opposition to none of its provisions. It was referred to and reported favorably by the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. Multiple amendments were proposed, with continued language referencing uniform billing and limiting pharmaceutical company gifts, but loss ratio limited to review, the areas of specific concern of the League. Following conferencing the bill was passed by the House and Senate and signed into law by the Governor.

Public Safety

House 1416 – An Act Relative to Improving Public Safety was sponsored by Rep. Festa and limited access to CORI information. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary and discharged on a Study Order in 3/08.

Senate 1379 – An Act Relative to Public Safety was sponsored by Senator Creem and included provisions to decrease overcrowding in prisons. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred to the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security and was discharged on a Study Order in 4/08.

House 1313 – An Act Relative to Confinement Conditions and Treatment of Prisoners with Mental Illness was sponsored by Rep. Balsler. The League lobbied in favor of this bill. It was referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary but was not reported out by the end of the legislative session.

Support the Single-Payer Ballot Question

■ by Judy Deutsch
Healthcare Specialist

“Shall the representative from this district be instructed (1) to support legislation that would establish health care as a human right regardless of age, state of health, or employment status by creating a single-payer health insurance system that is comprehensive, cost effective, and publicly provided to all residents of Massachusetts, and (2) to oppose any law penalizing the uninsured for failing to obtain health insurance.”

The above ballot question is expected to appear in the following districts: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Hampshire; 2nd Franklin; 12th Middlesex; Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket; 4th Barnstable; 10th Suffolk, 5th Middlesex; 15th Suffolk; and 4th Plymouth.

By voting for this ballot question, districts will show their support for the LWVMA-supported “Health Care Trust” bill, a single-payer bill. We ask that you work to get it passed if it appears in your district.



Victory After 26 Years!

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race, color, creed or national origin.”

A legislative commission set up to review MGL identified 150 places where men and women were treated differently. The legislature then began the process of rectifying these issues. In 1980, a significant piece of legislation was passed to equalize the rights of either spouse to live in, share in the profits of, control access to, and inherit the family homestead. This left one piece – to make insurance law gender neutral.

Facing the insurance industry, considered the major force behind the defeat of the federal Equal Rights Amendment in June of 1982, the coalition turned its sights on equal rights in all insurance products – health, disability, life, and annuities (auto insurance was made unisex in 1977). Initially, an omnibus bill was filed in 1982, to make all insurance gender neutral, but this soon proved too daunting (although Rep. Diane Wilkerson continued to file the bill each session).

The 35-member coalition changed its strategy, and with continued insurance-industry objections, began to attack health insurance first, winning mandated coverage for all women's reproductive health, one body part at a time – pregnancy, pap smears, mammograms, contraception, post-mastectomy reconstructive surgery, extended postnatal hospitalization, and emergency contraception. Of note is the fact that male reproductive needs are routinely covered voluntarily by the insurance industry.

With health insurance for women complete, the coalition turned to annuities and the discrepancy in men's and women's retirement income. Federal law, under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, followed by two Supreme Court decisions, requires

that employment-based annuities (pensions) must be gender neutral, as are both Social Security and IRS codes. State-regulated annuities, however, which are bought with 401(k) and other retirement savings, are gender based and give women 10% less than men in monthly benefits for the same face value of the policy.

After failure in several legislative sessions, the current session produced a winning team with Senate President Murray and Representative Balser as lead sponsors in each Chamber and Governor Patrick ready to sign. Following a unanimous vote in the Senate and a 115-37 roll call vote in the House, on July 31 Governor Patrick signed “An Act Relative to Equitable Coverage for Annuity Policies.”

Lobbying was complicated in this session by the introduction of a bill to allow Savings Bank Life Insurance (SBLI) to abandon its 100-year-old policy of selling unisex products, claiming SBLI, a company founded in 1907 by Louis Brandeis to provide affordable life insurance to the working class, needed a level playing field with other companies selling gender-based products. The Senate and House passed the SBLI bill, but the Governor vetoed it, attaching a letter to both Chambers, calling on them to amend the bill with language requiring all life insurance companies to sell gender-neutral products, thereby providing the level playing field that SBLI wanted.

The LWVMA wants to thank the Boston Globe for its two editorials in favor of gender equality regarding annuities and the SBLI bill and applauds Governor Patrick for his support in this victory for gender equality after 26 years.



President Diane Jeffery and Intern Lauren Blake at the Essay Contest

Internship Report

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While we had a brief tenure at the League, Lauren and I were treated like we were part of the team. We went to the staff meetings and some committee meetings, such as the Citizen Education committee. I feel that our input was always valued and because of that, we made a difference in the organization. Hearing about the internship experiences of friends, I know that Lauren and I were very lucky to have this opportunity. We were not merely given the “grunt work” of the organization, but got to oversee important projects. As Lauren begins Duke University and I head back to the College of the Holy Cross for my senior year in the Fall, we will miss our time at the League. However, we take with us a sense of pride for having been part of such an amazing organization and a call of duty, to continue our work of supporting democracy and civic involvement. We would like to thank President Diane Jeffery, Executive Director Shawna Reid, Senior Director Jo-Ann Berry, and Office Administrator Kim Jerdon for their wisdom, direction, and positive attitudes!



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